

# **Appropriate Assessment of the Longford Town Local Area Plan**

Appropriate Assessment Screening and  
Natura Impact Statement

**Longford County Council**

**Final report**

Prepared by LUC

June 2024

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Appropriate Assessment of the Longford Town Local Area Plan

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Background

**1.1** LUC was commissioned by Longford County Council (LCC) to undertake Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1) and, if required, full Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2) of the Longford Town Local Area Plan (LAP) 2024-2030.

**1.2** The Longford Town LAP sits within a hierarchy of planning policy. The Longford County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027 [\[See reference 1\]](#), adopted in October 2021, sets out the planning policies and objectives for the sustainable development of the county. County Policy Objective (CPO) 4.9 of the CDP states that the Council will prepare and implement a LAP for Longford Town within two years from the adoption of the Longford CDP 2021-2027. The Longford Town LAP sets out the land-use plan and strategy for the development of Longford Town over the period 2024-2030. The LAP has been informed by the recently adopted Longford Town Local Transport Plan (LTP) [\[See reference 2\]](#).

### Legislative context

**1.3** The 'Habitats Directive' (Directive 92/43/EEC) [\[See reference 3\]](#) is the principal legislative instrument for the protection and conservation of biodiversity within the European Union and lists certain habitats and species that must be protected within wildlife conservation areas. The 'Birds Directive' (Directive 2009/147/EC) [\[See reference 4\]](#) provides for a network of sites within the European Union which protect birds at their breeding, feeding, roosting and wintering areas. The Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive form the cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy. The Habitats Directive and

the Birds Directive are transposed into Irish legislation by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 [See reference 5], and Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended [See reference 6].

**1.4** Under the Directives, a network of sites of nature conservation importance have been identified by each Member State as containing specified habitats or species requiring to be maintained or returned to favourable conservation status. In Ireland, the Natura 2000 network of European sites comprise:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and candidate SAC designated under the Habitats Directive for particular habitat types (Annex I) and species (Annex II);
- Special Protection Areas (SPA) and proposed SPA designated under Article 4(1) of the Birds Directive for rare and vulnerable birds listed in Annex I, or Article 4(2) for regularly occurring migratory species not listed in Annex I; and
- Ramsar sites identified as internationally important wetland habitat under the 1971 Ramsar Convention despite being at the wider international level.

**1.5** The requirement for Appropriate Assessment is set out in Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) which states:

*“...any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to **appropriate assessment** of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives”.*

**1.6** Therefore, it is a requirement that each plan or project in Ireland must undergo an assessment of its implications on any European site before any decision is made to allow that plan or project to proceed. This process is referred to as Appropriate Assessment (AA).

**1.7** Longford County Council, as the ‘competent body’ responsible for the preparation of the Longford Town LAP, is also responsible for ensuring the LAP is prepared in compliance with the 'Habitats Directive' and 'Birds Directive', as transposed into national legislation.

**1.8** The overall purpose of AA is to conclude whether or not a plan or project would adversely affect the integrity of a European site. This is judged in terms of the implications of the plan or project for a site’s ‘qualifying interests’ (i.e. those Annex I habitats, Annex II species, and Annex I bird populations for which it has been designated); from these the ‘conservation objectives’ of the site are derived.

**1.9** Significantly, AA is based on the precautionary principle. Where uncertainty or doubt remains, an adverse effect should be assumed.

## **Stages in the Appropriate Assessment process**

**1.10** AA is a four-stage process with tests at each stage:

- Stage 1: Appropriate Assessment Screening
- Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment
- Stage 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions
- Stage 4: Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest/Derogation

**1.11** An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required.

**1.12** The four stages in the AA process are discussed in more detail in **Chapter 2**.



**Figure 1.1: Four-stages in the AA process**



**1.13** It is normally anticipated that an emphasis on Stages 1 and 2 of this process will, through a series of iterations, help ensure that potential adverse effects are identified and eliminated through the avoidance of likely significant effects at Stage 1, and through AA at Stage 2 by the inclusion of mitigation measures designed to avoid or reduce effects. The need to consider alternatives could imply more onerous changes to a plan document. It is generally understood that ‘imperative reasons of overriding public interest’ (IROPI) are likely to be justified only very occasionally and would involve engagement with the Government.

This report combines both Stage 1 Screening and Stage 2 AA of the Draft Longford Town LAP.

## Case law changes

**1.14** This report has been prepared with regard to relevant rulings by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), the High Court, and the Supreme Court, including but not limited to the following rulings. The rulings have been grouped into relevant topics. A summary of the rulings is provided in **Appendix B**.

### ■ Interpretation of ‘Likely Significant Effects’:

- European Court of Justice 7<sup>th</sup> September 2004 by Advocate General Kokott; Case C-127/02 Waddenzee -v- Secretary of State for Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Fisheries.

■ **Interpretation of direct, indirect and in-combination effects:**

- European Court of Justice Opinion 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012 by Advocate General Sharpston; Case C 258/11 Peter Sweetman and Others-v- An Bord Pleanála.
- European Court of Justice 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018; Case C 461/17; Holohan & Others v. An Bord Pleanála High Court Ruling 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 by Mr. Justice Denis McDonald; Neutral Citation [2020] IEHC 622; High Court Record No. 2020 238 JR; Highlands Residents Association and Protect East Meath Limited -v- An Bord Pleanála, Ireland and The Minister for Culture Heritage and The Gaeltacht, Ireland and The Attorney General.

■ **Application of the 'Precautionary Principle':**

- European Court of Justice Judgement 11<sup>th</sup> April 2013 by the Third Chamber; Case C 258/11 Peter Sweetman and Others -v- An Bord Pleanála.

■ **Application of mitigation / 'best practice measures':**

- European Court of Justice Judgement 12<sup>th</sup> April 2018 by the Seventh Chamber; Case C 323/17; People Over Wind & Sweetman -v- Coillte Teoranta.
- European Court of Justice 19<sup>th</sup> April 2018; Case C 164/17; Grace & Sweetman -v- An Bord Pleanála.
- High Court Ruling 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2019 by Mr. Justice Barniville; Neutral Citation [2019] IEHC 84; High Court Record No. 2017 883 JR; Kelly -v- An Bord Pleanála & Anor.
- High Court Ruling 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019 by Mr. Justice Simons; Neutral Citation [2019] IEHC 450; High Court Record No. 2019 20 JR; Heather Hill Management Company clg & anor -v- An Bord Pleanála & Anor.
- High Court Ruling 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 by Mr. Justice Denis McDonald; Neutral Citation [2020] IEHC 39; High Court Record No. 2019 33 JR; Peter Sweetman -v- An Bord Pleanála, Ireland and The Attorney General.

■ **Appropriate Assessment:**

- High Court Ruling 25<sup>th</sup> July 2014 by Ms. Justice Finlay Geoghegan; Neutral Citation [2014] IEHC 400; High Court Record No. 2013 802 JR; Kelly -v- An Bord Pleanála.
- High Court Ruling 25<sup>th</sup> February 2016 by Mr. Justice Barton; Neutral Citation [2016] IEHC 134; High Court Record No. 2013 450 JR; Balz & Heubach -v- An Bord Pleanála.
- Supreme Court Ruling 17<sup>th</sup> July 2018 by Mr Justice Clarke; Neutral Citation [2018]; Supreme Court Record No. 2014/488 JR; Connelly -v- An Bord Pleanála.
- European Court of Justice 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018; Case C 461/17; Holohan & Others v. An Bord Pleanála.

■ **Developer's responsibilities:**

- European Court of Justice 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018; Case C 461/17; Holohan & Others v. An Bord Pleanála.

## Structure of the report

**1.15** This chapter has introduced the Longford Town LAP; the requirement to undertake Screening, and if necessary, AA; the stages in the AA process; and relevant case law. The remainder of this report is structured into the following sections:

- **Chapter 2** sets out the approach for undertaking the Screening and AA stages.
- **Chapter 3** sets out the screening assessment of the Longford Town LAP (Stage 1).
- **Chapter 4** details the Natura Impact Statement prepared as part of the AA (Stage 2) and presents the AA Conclusion Statement.

**1.16** The main report is supported by the following appendices:

- **Appendix A** contains a map of the relevant European sites.
- **Appendix B** details the relevant case law rulings by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), the High Court, and the Supreme Court.
- **Appendix C** sets out the screening assessment of the objectives with the Longford Town LAP.
- **Appendix D** sets out the attributes of the relevant European sites.

## Chapter 2

# Methodology

**2.1** This chapter sets out the approach used to undertake Screening for Appropriate Assessment of the Longford Town LAP. It has been undertaken to comply with the requirements of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.

## Guidance documents

**2.2** This report has been prepared with regard to the following European and national guidance documents. The list is ordered by publication date.

### ■ European:

- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC [\[See reference 7\]](#)
- Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive [\[See reference 8\]](#)
- The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook [\[See reference 9\]](#)
- Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC [\[See reference 10\]](#)
- Commission guidance on streamlining environmental assessments conducted under Article 2(3) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU) [\[See reference 11\]](#)
- Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the ‘Habitats Directive’ 92/43/EEC. Clarification of the Concepts of: Alternative Solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence, Opinion of the Commission [\[See reference 12\]](#)

- Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle [\[See reference 13\]](#)
- **National:**
  - OPR Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management [\[See reference 14\]](#)
  - Guidance on the strict protection of certain animal and plant species under the Habitats Directive in Ireland [\[See reference 15\]](#)
  - Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities [\[See reference 16\]](#)
  - Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10. Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities [\[See reference 17\]](#).
  - Circular SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08. Appropriate Assessment of Land Use Plans [\[See reference 18\]](#).
  - Circular PD 2/07 & NPWS 1/07. Compliance conditions in respect of developments requiring (1) Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); or (2) having potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites [\[See reference 19\]](#).

## Data sources

**2.3** The following data sources were used to inform the baseline for the assessment:

- Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 [\[See reference 20\]](#).
- Appropriate Assessment GeoTool [\[See reference 21\]](#).
- National Parks and Wildlife Service Protected Sites data [\[See reference 22\]](#), including Designated Sites boundary data, site-specific Conservation Objectives, SAC datasheets, and SPA datasheets.
- Various Species Action Plans and Reports [\[See reference 23\]](#).

- Information on species records and distributions, obtained from the National Biodiversity Data Centre.
- Information on waterbodies, catchment areas and hydrological connections obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency **[See reference 24]**.
- Information on bedrock, groundwater, aquifers and their statuses, obtained from Geological Survey Ireland **[See reference 25]**.
- Satellite imagery and mapping obtained from various sources and dates including Google and Ordnance Survey Ireland.
- Information on the existence of permitted developments, or developments awaiting decision, in the Longford area.

## Overview of the Appropriate Assessment process

**2.4** The AA process comprises four main stages as summarised in the subsequent paragraphs.

### Stage 1: Screening

- **Process:**
  - Identifies whether the LAP is directly connected to, or necessary for, the management of a European site(s).
- **Tasks:**
  - Description of the Longford Town LAP.
  - Identification of potentially affected European site(s) and their conservation objectives.

- Assessment of likely significant effects of the plan, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, prior to consideration of avoidance or reduction ('mitigation') measures.
- Screening Conclusion Statement.
- **Output:**
  - The output from this stage is a determination of not significant, significant, potentially significant, or uncertain effects. The latter two determinations will cause the plan to be taken forward to Stage 2.

## Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment

- **Process:**
  - Identifies whether the LAP may have significant impact(s) upon European site(s) either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.
- **Tasks:**
  - Information gathering (data on European site(s) of relevance to the Longford Town LAP).
  - Impact prediction.
  - Evaluation of the Longford Town LAP impacts in view of conservation objectives of European site(s).
  - Where impacts are considered to directly or indirectly affect qualifying interests of European site(s), identify how these effects will be avoided or reduced ('mitigation').
  - Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement.
- **Output:**
  - The output from this stage is a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). This document must include sufficient information for the competent authority to carry out the Appropriate Assessment. If the assessment is negative, i.e. adverse effects on the integrity of a site cannot be



excluded despite incorporation of measures to avoid or reduce the adverse effects, then the process must consider alternatives (Stage 3).

## Stage 3: Assessment of alternative solutions

### ■ **Process:**

- Assesses alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of European site(s). May be carried out concurrently with Stage 2 in order to find the most appropriate solution.

### ■ **Tasks:**

- Assessment of alternative solutions.

### ■ **Output:**

- If no alternatives exist or all alternatives would result in negative impacts to site integrity, then the process either moves to Stage 4 or the plan is abandoned.

## Stage 4: Imperative reasons of overriding public interest/derogation

### ■ **Process:**

- Assesses whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) for allowing a plan that will have adverse effects on the integrity of a European site to proceed in cases where it has been established that no less damaging alternative solution exists.

### ■ **Tasks:**

- Identify and demonstrate 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI). NB: Prior consultation with Minister regarding IROPI.
- Demonstrate no alternatives exist.

- Identify potential compensatory measures.
- **Output:**
  - This stage should be avoided if at all possible. The test of IROPI and the requirements for compensation are extremely onerous.

## Stage 1: Screening

**2.5** The purpose of the screening stage is to:

- Identify all aspects of the Longford Town LAP that would have no effect on a European site. These can be eliminated from further consideration in respect of this plan.
- Identify all aspects of the Longford Town LAP that would not be likely to have a significant effect on a European site (i.e. would have some effect because of links/connectivity but the effect is not significant), either alone or in combination with other aspects of the LAP, or other plans or projects. These do not require Appropriate Assessment.
- Identify those aspects of the Longford Town LAP where it is not possible to rule out the risk of significant effects on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This provides a clear scope for the parts of the LAP that will require Appropriate Assessment.

**2.6** Figure 2.1 illustrates the main steps in undertaking Screening of the LAP for AA.

**Figure 2.1: The main steps in the Screening process**



## Step 1: Description of the Longford Town LAP and their context

**2.7** The first element of Screening is to provide the following information on the Longford Town LAP (see **Chapter 3**):

- Background and context;
- Purpose of the Longford Town LAP;
- Geographical area covered by the Longford Town LAP;

- Content of the Longford Town LAP including its aims, objectives and policies; and,
- Stage of the Longford Town LAP.

## Step 2: Identification of relevant European site(s)

**2.8** When assessing impact, qualifying interests of conservation interest are only considered relevant where a credible or tangible **source-pathway-receptor** link exists between the plan or project and qualifying species or habitats. In order for an impact to occur, there must be a risk initiated by having a 'source' (e.g. construction works), a 'receptor' (e.g. a protected species, associated aquatic or riparian habitats), and an impact pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. a watercourse which connects the plan or project to the site designated for the protection of a species). If there is no pathway or the qualifying interests of the European site(s) are not vulnerable (either directly or indirectly) to any impact predicted from the plan or project, then a site should not be screened in.

### Zone of Impact

**2.9** The 'Zone of Impact' (Zol) for a plan or project is the area over which ecological features may be subject to significant effects as a result of the proposed project and associated activities. This is likely to extend beyond the Longford Town LAP boundary, for example where there are ecological or hydrological links beyond the plan boundary. The Zol will vary for different ecological features depending on their sensitivity to an environmental change **[See reference 26]**.

**2.10** A distance of 15km is currently recommended by the NPWS in the case of plans as a potential Zol which is derived from UK guidance **[See reference 27]**. Therefore, a distance of 15km from the boundary of the Longford Town LAP

study area has been used in the first instance to identify European sites with the potential to be affected by the LAP. Consideration has also been given to whether any more distant European sites may be connected to the study areas via effects pathways, for example through hydrological links.

**2.11** The assessment also takes into account areas that may be functionally linked to the European sites. The term ‘functional linkage’ is used to refer to the role or ‘function’ that land beyond the boundary of a European site might fulfil in terms of supporting the species populations for which the site was designated or classified. Such an area is therefore ‘linked’ to the site in question because it provides a (potentially important) role in maintaining or restoring a protected population at favourable conservation status.

**2.12** While the boundary of a European site will usually be drawn to include key supporting habitat for a qualifying species, this cannot always be the case where the population for which a site is designated or classified is particularly mobile. Individuals of the population will not necessarily remain in the site all the time. Sometimes, the mobility of qualifying species is considerable and may extend so far from the key habitat that forms the SAC or SPA that it would be entirely impractical to attempt to designate or classify all of the land or sea that may conceivably be used by the species. Screening for AA therefore considers whether any European sites make use of functionally linked habitats, and the impacts that could affect those habitats.

**2.13 Chapter 3** of this report identifies the relevant SACs/cSACs, SPAs/proposed SPAs, and Ramsar sites within 15km of the Longford Town LAP study area. A map of the study area and the relevant European sites is provided in **Appendix A**. **Appendix D** characterises each of the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of the European sites in context of each of the sites’ vulnerabilities.

## Step 3: Assessment of ‘Likely Significant Effects’ of the Longford Town LAP

**2.14** A precautionary approach has been adopted in the assessment of Likely Significant Effects. A conclusion of ‘no Likely Significant Effect’ therefore has only been reached where it is considered very unlikely, based on current knowledge and the information available, that the Longford Town LAP would have a significant effect on the integrity of a European site. The screening assessment has been conducted without taking mitigation into account, in accordance with the ‘People over Wind’ judgment.

### Types of potential effects

**2.15** The European Commission's Appropriate Assessment Guidance [\[See reference 28\]](#) outlines the following potential changes that may occur at a designated site, which may result in adverse effects on the integrity and function of that site:

- **Physical loss/reduction of habitat area:**
  - Loss of habitat within the designated boundaries of a European site.
- **Habitat or species fragmentation (functionally linked land):**
  - Change in comparison with the original and desired states (e.g. creation of several small habitat patches instead of one large one, hectares of habitat exposed to the edge effect).
- **Non-physical disturbance (noise, visual, light):**
  - Activities which result in disturbance, causing sensitive birds and mammals to deviate from their normal, preferred behaviour, such as construction, recreational, traffic.
- **Recreational pressures:**

- Recreational pressures such as trampling and erosion, and where sites are close to urban areas, other damaging activities may occur such as rubbish tipping, vandalism, arson, and predation, particularly by cats.

### ■ **Changes in water levels or tables:**

- Activities that may affect surface and groundwater levels, such as land drainage and abstraction, may have adverse impacts on water dependant habitats and species.

### ■ **Changes in water quality:**

- Activities that may impact upon water quality, such as accidental pollution spills, run-off from urban areas, nutrient enrichment from agriculture, and discharge from sewage works, may adversely affect wetland habitats and species.

### ■ **Changes to surface water flooding:**

- Activities that may result in a reduction or increase in the frequency and extent of surface water flooding, which may affect riverine and floodplain habitats.

### ■ **Turbidity and siltation:**

- Increases in turbidity within water environments can impact upon aquatic plants, fish and wildfowl due to sedimentation and reduction in penetrable light.

### ■ **Pollution:**

- Activities that may lead to the release of pollutants to the air such as oxides of nitrogen, oxides of sulphur or ammonia, or pollutants deposited on the ground through acidification or terrestrial eutrophication via soil (deposition of nitrogen).

**2.16** This thematic/impact category approach allows for consideration to be given to the potential for cumulative effects of separate elements of the Longford Town LAP. Each of the objectives within the Longford Town LAP were screened to determine whether there are any Likely Significant Effects on European sites.

## Interpretation of ‘Likely Significant Effects’

**2.17** In the Waddenzee case [See reference 29], the CJEU ruled on the interpretation of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, including that:

An effect should be considered ‘likely’, *“if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it will have a significant effect on the site”* (para 44). An effect should be considered ‘significant’, *“if it undermines the conservation objectives”* (para 48). Where a plan or project has an effect on a site *“but is not likely to undermine its conservation objectives, it cannot be considered likely to have a significant effect on the site concerned”* (para 47).

**2.18** The Screening stage therefore considers whether the LAP could have Likely Significant Effects on European sites, either alone or in combination.

## Mitigation provided by the Longford Town LAP

**2.19** Some of the potential effects of the Longford Town LAP could be mitigated through the implementation of other aspects of the Longford Town LAP, policies in the Longford County Development Plan, or other regulatory mechanisms. Nevertheless, in accordance with the ‘People over Wind’ judgment, avoidance and reduction (‘mitigation’) measures cannot be relied upon at the Screening stage, and therefore, where such measures exist, they would be considered at the AA stage where Likely Significant Effects, either alone or in-combination, could not be ruled out.



## Assessment of potential in-combination effects

**2.20** Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires Screening for AA where “a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives”. Therefore, where likely insignificant effects are identified for the Longford Town LAP alone, it is necessary to consider whether these may become significant effects in-combination with other plans or projects.

**2.21** Where the LAP is likely to have an effect on its own (due to impact pathways being present), but it is not likely to be significant, the in-combination assessment at Screening stage needs to determine whether there may also be the same types of effect from other plans or projects that could combine with the LAP to produce a significant effect. If so, this Likely Significant Effect arising from the LAP in-combination with other plans or projects, would then need to be considered through the AA stage to determine if the impact pathway would have an adverse effect on integrity of the relevant European site.

**2.22** Where the screening assessment has concluded that there is no impact pathway between the LAP and the conditions necessary to maintain qualifying interests of a European site, then there will be no in-combination effects to assess at the Screening or AA stage.

**2.23** If impact pathways are found to exist for a particular effect but it is not likely to be significant from the LAP alone, the in-combination assessment will identify which other plans and programmes could result in the same impact on the same European site. This will focus on planned growth (including housing, employment, transport, minerals and waste) around the affected site, or along the impact corridor.

**2.24** The potential for in-combination impacts would therefore focus on plans prepared by local authorities that overlap with European sites that are within the scope of this report. The findings of any associated AA work for those plans would be reviewed where available. Where relevant, any strategic projects in

the area that could have in-combination effects with the LAP would also be identified and reviewed.

**2.25** In-combination effects must include an examination of [\[See reference 30\]](#):

- Projects completed;
- Projects approved but not started or uncompleted;
- Projects proposed, i.e. for which an application for approval or consent has been made, including refusals subject to appeal and not yet determined;
- Proposals in adopted plans; and
- Proposals in finalised draft plans formally published or submitted for consultation or adoption.

**2.26** Plans and projects that are not yet proposed do not generally have to be taken into account in the assessment of in-combination effects [\[See reference 31\]](#), even if they are part of an overarching masterplan [\[See reference 32\]](#). The need for in-combination assessment also arises at the AA stage.

## Step 4: Conclusion and Screening Statement

**2.27** To support the decision-making of Longford County Council as the competent authority, a clear statement of the conclusion reached, and the basis upon which it was reached is provided in **Chapter 3**.

**2.28** Screening of the LAP for AA would result in the following possible conclusions or outcomes, as defined in the Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities [\[See reference 33\]](#):

### 1. AA is not required.

- Screening, followed by consultation and agreement with the NPWS, establishes that the Longford Town LAP is directly connected with

and/or necessary to the nature conservation management of the potentially affected European sites.

**2. No potential for significant effects/AA is not required.**

- Screening establishes that there is no potential for significant effects and the Longford Town LAP can proceed as proposed.

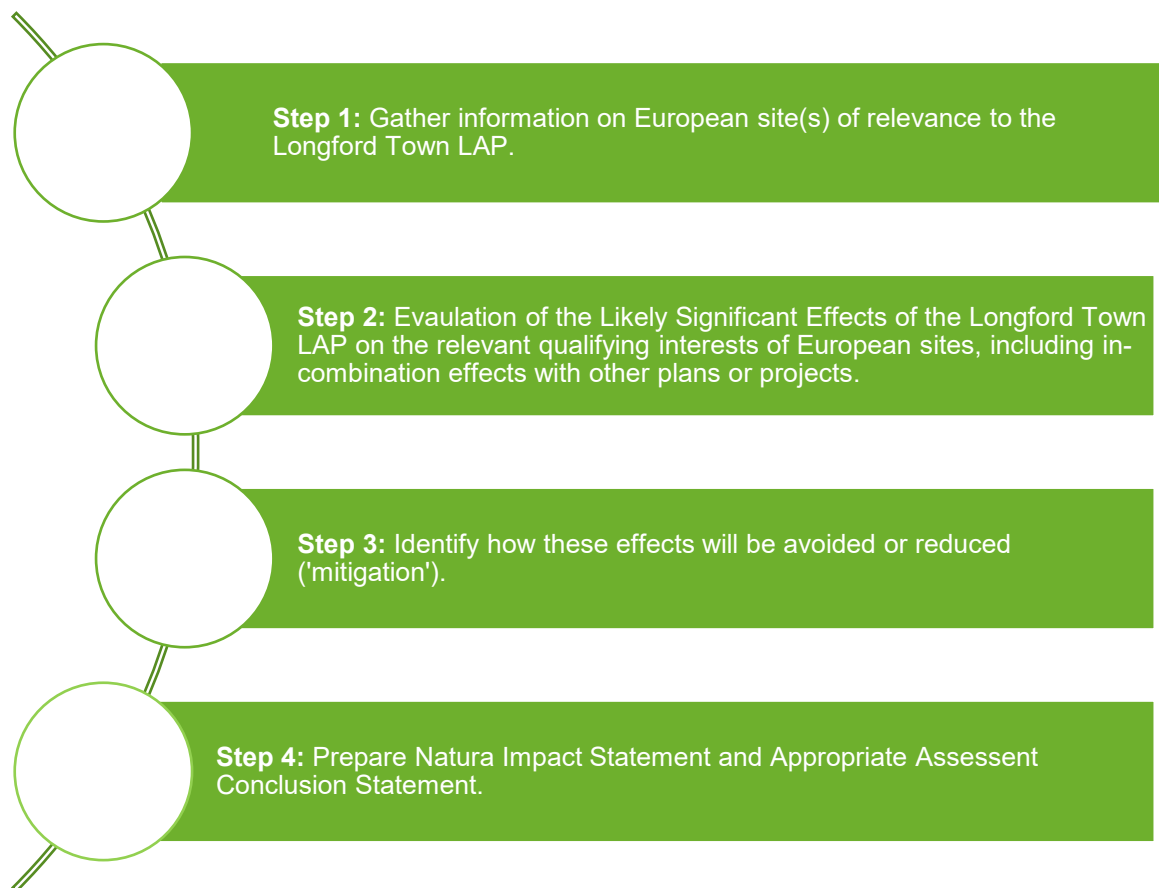
**3. Significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain.**

- The Longford Town LAP must either proceed to Stage 2 (AA) or be rejected.

## **Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment**

**2.29 Figure 2.2** overleaf illustrates the main steps for undertaking AA of the Longford Town LAP.

**Figure 2.2: The main steps in the AA process**



**2.30** The emphasis for AA is to prove that no adverse impacts due to the LAP will occur which would undermine a European site's conservation integrity.

Site integrity can be defined as: *“the coherence of its structure and function across its whole area that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was classified”* [See reference 34].

**2.31** The assessment also takes into account any avoidance or additional measures which will be implemented to avoid or reduce the level of impact from the LAP. The competent authority may also consider the use of conditions or

restrictions to help avoid Adverse Effects on Integrity (AEoI) of the European sites. The findings of Stage 2 are reported in a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). Following the completion of the AA, the competent authority must produce an AA Conclusion Statement which identifies the potential adverse impacts of the LAP on the European sites and if possible, explain how those effects will be avoided through mitigation.

**2.32** If the AA concludes that there will be an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site, or that there is uncertainty and a precautionary approach is taken, then consent can only be granted if there are no alternative solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) is applicable and compensatory measures have been secured.

## Limitations and constraints

**2.33** The assessment necessarily relies on some assumptions, and it was inevitably subject to some limitations. These do not affect the conclusion, but the following points are recorded to ensure the basis of the assessment is clear:

- The LAP is a higher-level plan. Therefore, this assessment cannot include any detailed assessment of any developments that may arise from the implementation of this LAP. Where broad level assessments are required to determine the potential for cumulative or in-combination impacts, the precautionary principle is used.
- Any changes to the LAP will require re-assessment to determine if further screening and assessment will be required. In all instances of this assessment, the precautionary principle is used.

## Chapter 3

### Stage 1: Screening

**3.1** This chapter sets out the Screening for Appropriate Assessment of the Longford Town LAP.

## Description of the Longford Town LAP

### Background and context

**3.2** Section 19 (1)(b)(ii) of the Planning and Development Act, as amended, specifies that a town with a population of over 5,000 requires the preparation of a Local Area Plan. Longford Town has a population of 10,952 persons (Census 2022) [\[See reference 35\]](#), and therefore there is a mandatory requirement for a Local Area Plan for the town.

**3.3** Longford is designated as a ‘Key Town’ in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region [\[See reference 36\]](#) which gives it a role as a key growth driver of the county and Midlands region. Longford Town is the only ‘Key Town’ in the county.

**3.4** The designation of Longford as a ‘Key Town’ is reflected in the Longford County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027 [\[See reference 37\]](#) with Longford Town identified as the settlement targeted for the most growth in the county over the plan period. County Policy Objective (CPO) 4.9 of the CDP states that the Council will prepare and implement a LAP for Longford Town within two years from the adoption of the CDP.

**3.5** The LAP supports housing development, economic growth, education services and community-related development, in line with the principles of

proper planning and sustainable development. The plan's policy objectives, development management standards and zoning provisions have been informed by best practice and national planning guidance, and are prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Longford CDP. The Longford Town LAP is also informed by the recently adopted Longford Town Local Transport Plan [See reference 38].

## Purpose

**3.6** The purpose of the Longford Town LAP is to guide the social, economic, cultural and physical development of Longford Town over the six years of the plan.

## Geographical area covered

**3.7** County Longford is the fourth smallest county in area in Ireland. It is located in the midlands of Ireland and is bordered by counties Westmeath, Cavan, Leitrim and Roscommon. Longford Town is located in the centre of the county and is the principal town of the county. The focus of the LAP study area is located within the boundary of Longford Town and its environs. **Figure 3.1** overleaf illustrates the geographical extent of the Longford Town LAP.



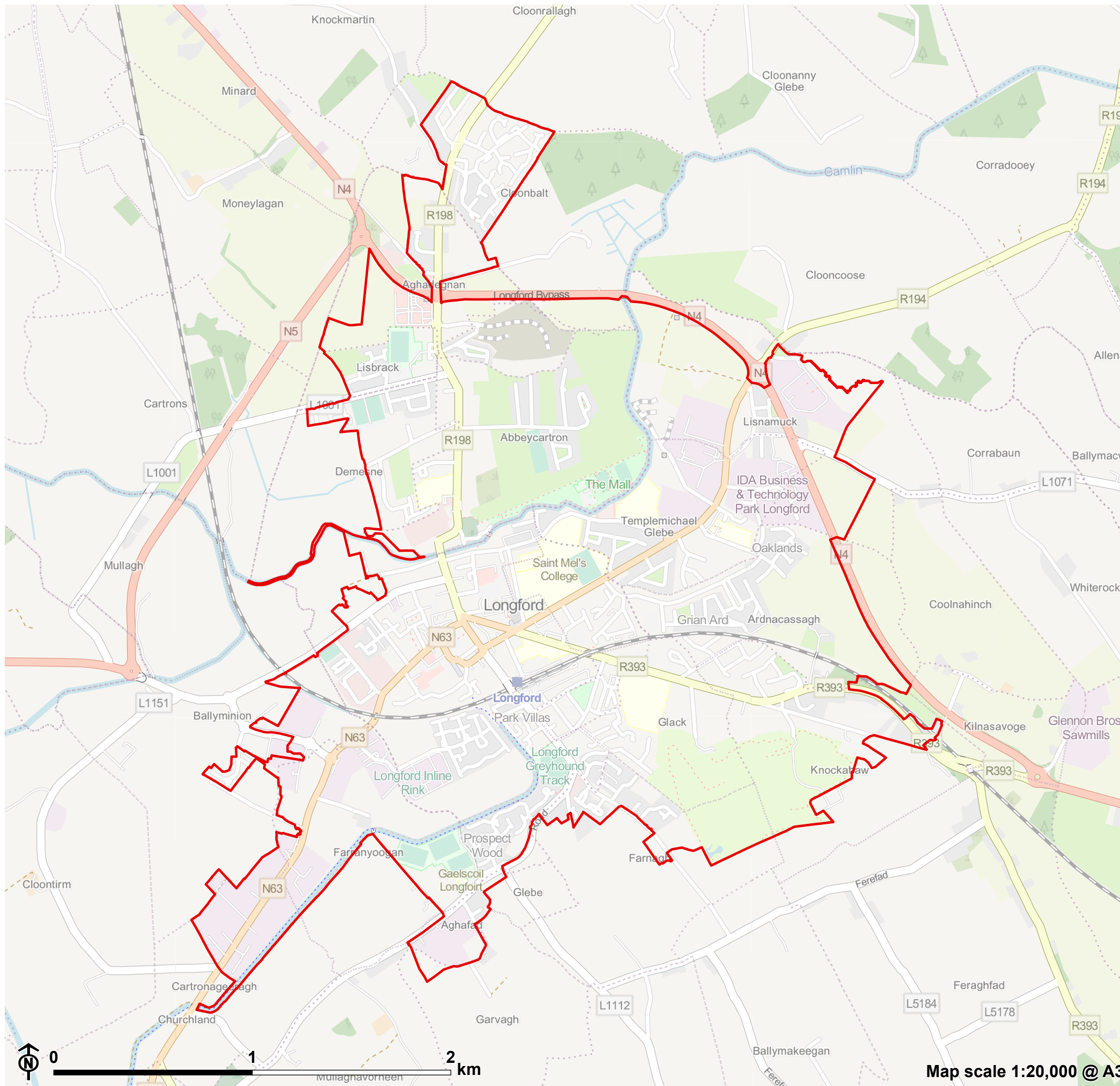
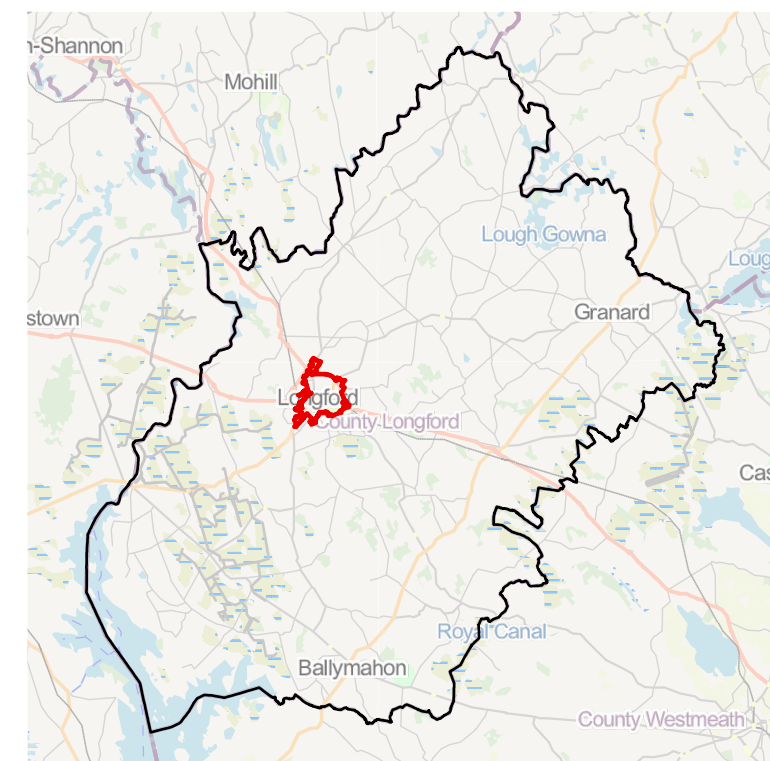


Figure 3.1: Study Area

- Longford Town LAP Study Area
- Longford County





## Content

**3.8** The Longford Town LAP is a statutory document that sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Longford Town over a six-year horizon (2024-2030) and has a strong focus on the integration of land-use and transportation. The Longford Town LAP consists of a written statement containing a set of strategic aims for the town, in addition to detailed objectives for the sustainable development of social, physical and environmental infrastructure within Longford Town. The Longford Town LAP includes maps detailing specific land-use zonings within the town, which are informed by the ‘Longford Town Zonings’ that were included in the adopted Longford CDP 2021-2027 Volume 2 – Appendix 1 Land Use Zonings **[See reference 39]**.

**3.9** The Vision for the Longford LAP is ***“to set out a framework for the sustainable physical development of Longford Town, ensuring the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment, while providing in an equitable manner for all our people within the town”***.

**3.10** The Vision for Longford Town is underpinned by 12 strategic aims which are designed to provide a level of focus and direction to the objectives set out in the LAP. The strategic aims of the Longford Town LAP are:

- **Core Strategy Compliance:** to support the sustainable long-term growth of Longford Town in accordance with the Core Strategy of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 (or any succeeding plan), the provisions of the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031.
- **Residential Sustainability and Placemaking:** to support and facilitate the development of integrated sustainable neighbourhoods that respond to the needs of changing demographics in terms of housing delivery.
- **Economic Development:** to encourage sustainable employment growth and economic activity and promote Longford Town as a local and regional centre of trade, business and tourism.

- **Tourism:** to encourage and provide for the continued expansion of the tourism sector by the continued sustainable development and enhancements of visitor attractions and activities capitalising on our natural and cultural assets in a sustainable manner.
- **Regeneration and Placemaking:** to tackle problems of population decline, lack of investment and physical dereliction in an integrated and cross cutting way, through several policy areas including integrated land use and socio-economic measures to address the physical, economic, social and environmental problems associated with dereliction and decay.
- **Social Infrastructure:** to facilitate and secure the provision of social infrastructure to support existing and new communities within the plan area, in a manner which provides flexibility to respond to varied and changing community needs.
- **Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure:** to contribute towards the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage and the biodiversity within the Local Area Plan boundary and to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits.
- **Built and Cultural Heritage:** to conserve and manage Longford's unique heritage assets for the benefit of present and future generations and to promote such assets as generators of economic development and urban regeneration while adhering to the relevant statutory obligations.
- **Infrastructure:** to ensure that the delivery of infrastructural services is guided by the principles of sustainable development in facilitating more efficient land use and physical development, whilst providing for the continued social and economic growth of the county.
- **Sustainable Transport:** to promote the use and increased delivery of sustainable modes of transport within the town, in order to contribute towards the achievement of Ireland's carbon emission reduction requirements.
- **Climate Change:** to ensure Longford Town becomes a climate resilient town by promoting the economic, social and environmental benefits of low-carbon development, creating an integrated green infrastructure network,

prioritising sustainable mobility and building at sustainable densities in appropriate locations.

- **Implementation and Monitoring:** to ensure development occurs in tandem with the delivery of supporting physical and social infrastructure, in an orderly and efficient manner and in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

**3.11** Based on the strategic aims, there are a total of 316 objectives to support and guide sustainable development of Longford Town. The objectives cover the following areas:

- Core Strategy (15 objectives);
- Residential Density, Mix and Design (18 objectives);
- Economic Development (12 objectives);
- Retail (nine objectives);
- Tourism (26 objectives);
- Longford Town Regeneration and Placemaking (22 objectives);
- Master Planning – Strategic Sites (10 objectives);
- Public Realm, Universal Design and Age Friendly (eight objectives);
- Education, Childcare and Health Facilities (seven objectives);
- Social Infrastructure (19 objectives);
- Natural Heritage and Biodiversity (25 objectives);
- Green Infrastructure (12 objectives);
- Protected Structures (10 objectives);
- Architectural Conservation Area (11 objectives);
- Archaeological Heritage (six objectives);
- Energy, Communications and Waste (nine objectives);
- Water Supply and Wastewater Services (20 objectives);

- Surface Water (seven objectives);
- Flood Risk Management (four objectives);
- Sustainable Transport (32 objectives);
- Climate Change (25 objectives); and
- Active Land Management (nine objectives).

## Stage

**3.12** Longford County Council is currently preparing the Draft Longford Town LAP. It is anticipated that the Draft Longford Town LAP will be published for public consultation by the Council in summer 2024 for a six-week period. The submissions and observations received during the public consultation period will be reviewed and considered by the Council during the finalisation of the Longford Town LAP. Depending on the scale and nature of Material Alterations to the Draft LAP, a revised version of the LAP may be published for public consultation. It is expected that the Longford Town LAP will be adopted in winter 2024 / spring 2025.

## Identification of relevant European sites

**3.13** There are no European sites within the boundary of the Longford Town LAP study area. **Table 3.1** identifies the European sites within the 15km Zol for Longford Town LAP. Note there are no cSACs, or proposed SPAs within the Zol. A map of the study area and the relevant European sites is provided in **Appendix A**.

**Table 3.1: European sites identified within the Zone of Impact**

European Site	Site Code	Closest Distance from LAP Area Boundary
Brown Bog SAC	002346	2km
Mount Jessop Bog SAC	002202	2.9km
Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA	004101	3km
Lough Forbes Complex SAC	001818	3.4km
Clooneen Bog SAC	002348	7.4km
Lough Ree SPA	004064	12km
Lough Ree SAC	000448	12km
Glen Lough SPA	004045	14km
Fortwilliam Turlough SAC	000448	14km
Argagullion Bog SAC	002341	15km

## Qualifying Interests of the European sites

**3.14 Appendix D** characterises in detail each of the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of the European sites in context of each of the sites' vulnerabilities. However, a synopsis of the qualifying interests for the relevant European sites is provided below.

■ **Brown Bog SAC** (2km distance):

- Active raised bogs [7110]
- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
- Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion* [7150]

■ **Mount Jessop Bog SAC** (2.9km distance):

- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
- Bog woodland [91D0]
- **Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA** (3km distance):
  - Greenland White-fronted Goose; *Anser albifrons flavirostris* [A395]
- **Lough Forbes Complex SAC** (3.4km distance):
  - Natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition* – type vegetation [3150]
  - Active raised bogs [7110]
  - Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
  - Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion* [7150]
  - Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, Alnion Incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]
- **Clooneen Bog SAC** (7.4km distance):
  - Active raised bogs [7110]
  - Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
  - Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion* [7150]
  - Bog woodland [91D0]
- **Lough Ree SPA** (12km distance):
  - Little Grebe; *Tachybaptus ruficollis* [A004]
  - Whooper Swan; *Cygnus cygnus* [A038]
  - Wigeon; *Anas Penelope* [A050]
  - Teal; *Anas crecca* [A052]
  - Mallard; *Anas platyrhynchos* [A053]
  - Shoveler; *Anas clypeata* [A056]
  - Tufted Duck; *Aythya fuligula* [A061]

- Common Scoter; *Melanitta nigra* [A065]
- Goldeneye; *Bucephala clangula* [A067]
- Coot; *Fulica atra* [A125]
- Golden Plover; *Pluvialis apricaria* [A140]
- Lapwing; *Vanellus vanellus* [A142]
- Common Tern; *Sterna hirundo* [A193]
- Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
- **Lough Ree SAC** (12km distance):
  - Natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition* – type vegetation [3150]
  - Semi-natural grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (\*important orchid sites) [6210]
  - Active raised bogs [7110]
  - Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
  - Alkaline fens [7230]
  - Limestone pavements [8240]
  - Bog woodland [91D0]
  - Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, Alnion Incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]
  - Otter; *Lutra lutra* [1355]
- **Fortwilliam Turlough SAC** (14km distance):
  - Turloughs [3180]
- **Glen Lough SPA** (14km distance):
  - Whooper Swan; *Cygnus cygnus* [A038]
- **Argagullion Bog SAC** (15km distance):
  - Active raised bogs [7110]

- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
- Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion* [7150]

## Conservation Objectives of the European sites

The overall aims of the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive are to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest:

- For SACs, to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been designated; and
- For SPAs, to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed in Annex I, for which the SPA has been designated.

**3.15** According to the Habitats Directive, the conservation status of a natural habitat will be taken as 'favourable' within its biogeographic range when:

- Its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable as defined below.

**3.16** According to the Habitats Directive, the conservation status of a species means the sum of the impacts acting on the species concerned that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its populations. The conservation status will be taken as 'favourable' within its biogeographic range when:



- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

**3.17** The specific conservation objectives for each European site were derived from the NPWS website and were reviewed at the time of preparing this report in April/May 2024.

**3.18** Generic conservation objectives apply to all 10 of the European sites within the 15km ZoI. Where available, site-specific conservation objectives designed to define favourable conservation status for a particular habitat or species at that site have been considered. Site-specific/more detailed conservation objectives were available for the following sites:

- Brown Bog SAC – for raised bog habitats.
- Mount Jessop Bog SAC – for raised bog habitats.
- Lough Forbes Complex SAC – for raised bog habitats.
- Clooneen Bog SAC – for raised bog habitats.
- Lough Ree SAC – for raised bog habitats.
- Fortwilliam Turlough SAC – for turloughs.
- Ardagullion Bog SAC – for raised bog habitats.

**3.19** Management plans were not available for any of the sites.

## Screening assessment of Likely Significant Effects

**3.20** This section considers the aims and objectives of the Longford Town LAP and identifies whether they are likely to have a significant effect, either alone, or in-combination with other plans or projects, on the European sites within the Zol.

**3.21** The ‘screening’ process addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive:

- Is the plan or programme directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site; and
- Will the plan or programme, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, have a significant effect on a European site in view of its conservation objectives.

**3.22** If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, then the LAP will be subject to a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

## AA Screening of provisions of the Longford Town LAP

### No ‘Likely Significant Effect’ predicted

**3.23** Each objective was appraised to determine the Likely Significant Effects on European sites. The results of the screening assessment are contained within **Appendix C**. The following objectives are not expected to result in Likely Significant Effects on any European site:

## **5. CORE STRATEGY COMPLIANCE**

### ■ Core Strategy Objectives:

- CS 02, CS 04, CS 06, CS 11 – CS 15.

## **6. RESIDENTIAL, SUSTAINABILITY AND PLACEMAKING**

### ■ Residential Density, Mix and Design Objectives:

- RES 03 – RES 06; RES 08 - RES 18.

## **7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### ■ Economic Development Objectives:

- ECON 01; ECON 07; ECON 09 – ECON 10; and ECON 12.

### ■ Retail Objectives:

- RET 01; RET 04; RET 06 to RET 09.

## **8. TOURISM**

### ■ Tourism Objectives:

- TOU 01, TOU 03, TOU 04, TOU 08 - TOU 14, TOU 16 –TOU 18, TOU 21 - TOU 26.

## **9. REGENERATION AND PLACEMAKING**

### ■ Longford Town Regeneration and Placemaking Objectives:

- REG 01, REG 07, REG 09 – REG 11, REG 16 - REG 22.

### ■ Master Planning – Strategic Sites Objectives:

- MP 04 - MP 10.

### ■ Public Realm, Universal Design and Age Friendly Objectives:

- PUA 01 to PUA 08.

## **10. SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

### ■ Education, Childcare and Health Facilities Objectives:

- ECH 02 - ECH 03; ECH 05; ECH 07.

■ Social Infrastructure Objectives:

- CSR 02 – CSR 07; CSR 09 – CSR 10; CSR12 – CSR 19.

**11. NATURAL HERITAGE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

■ Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Objectives:

- NHB 01 to NHB 25.

■ Green Infrastructure Objectives:

- GI 02 - GI 06; GI 09 - GI 10; and GI 12.

**12. BUILT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

■ Protected Structures Objectives:

- PS 01 - PS 10.

■ Architectural Conservation Area Objectives:

- AC 01 - AC 11.

■ Archaeological Heritage Objectives:

- AH 01 - AH 06.

**13. INFRASTRUCTURE**

■ Energy, Communications and Waste Objectives:

- EC 04; and EC 07 - 09.

■ Water Supply and Wastewater Services Objectives:

- WS 01, WS 07 – WS 12, WS 14 – 20.

■ Surface Water Objectives:

- SW 01 to SW 07.

■ Flood Risk Management Objectives:

- FR 01 to FR 04.

■ Sustainable Transport Objectives:

- ST 01 – ST 04, ST 07 – ST 16, ST 18 – ST 20, ST 22– ST 25.

## 14. CLIMATE CHANGE

### ■ Climate Change Objectives:

- CC 01 - CC 06, CC 08 - CC 10, CC 13 - CC 25.

## 15. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

### ■ Active Land Management Objectives:

- AL 03, AL 04, AL 07 – AL 09.

## In-combination assessment

**3.24** Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires Screening for AA where “*a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives*”. Therefore, where likely insignificant effects are identified for the Longford Town LAP alone, it is necessary to consider whether these may become significant effects in combination with other plans or projects.

In order to be realised, projects proposed in the Longford Town LAP will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements, as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent granting framework.

**3.25** In-combination effects from the implementation of the above objectives are unlikely as there are no impact pathways and therefore there is no mechanism by which a non-effect could interact to create an in-combination effect.

## **‘Likely Significant Effects’ predicted**

**3.26** The following objectives are highlighted as having potential impact pathways to European sites and Likely Significant Effects cannot be ruled out:

### **5. CORE STRATEGY COMPLIANCE**

- Core Strategy Objectives:
  - CS 01, CS 03, CS 05, CS 07 - CS 10.

### **6. RESIDENTIAL, SUSTAINABILITY AND PLACEMAKING**

- Residential Density, Mix and Design Objectives:
  - RES 01, RES 02 and RES 07.

### **7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- Economic Development Objectives:
  - ECON 02 – ECON 06; ECON 08; and ECON 11.
- Retail Objectives:
  - RET 02, RET 03 and RET 05.

### **8. TOURISM**

- Tourism Objectives:
  - TOU 02, TOU 05, TOU 06, TOU 07, TOU 15, TOU 19, and TOU 20.

### **9. REGENERATION AND PLACEMAKING**

- Longford Town Regeneration and Placemaking Objectives:
  - REG 02 - REG 06, REG 08, REG 12, REG 13, REG 14 and REG 15
- Master Planning – Strategic Sites Objectives:
  - MP 01, MP 02 and MP 03
- Public Realm, Universal Design and Age Friendly Objectives:

- No 'Public Realm, Universal Design and Age Friendly' objectives screened-in.

#### **10. SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

##### ■ Education, Childcare and Health Facilities Objectives:

- ECH 01, ECH 04 and ECH 06.

##### ■ Social Infrastructure Objectives:

- CSR 01, CSR 08, and CSR 11.

#### **11. NATURAL HERITAGE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

##### ■ Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Objectives:

- No 'Natural Heritage and Biodiversity' objectives screened-in.

##### ■ Green Infrastructure Objectives:

- GI 01, GI 07, GI 08 and GI 11.

#### **12. BUILT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

##### ■ Protected Structures Objectives:

- No 'Protected Structures' objectives screened-in.

##### ■ Architectural Conservation Area Objectives:

- No 'Architectural Conservation Area' objectives screened-in.

##### ■ Archaeological Heritage Objectives:

- No 'Archaeological Heritage' objectives screened-in.

#### **13. INFRASTRUCTURE**

##### ■ Energy, Communications and Waste Objectives:

- EC 01, EC 02, EC 03, ECON 05 and EC 06.

##### ■ Water Supply and Wastewater Services Objectives:

- WS 02 - WS 06 and WS 13.

##### ■ Surface Water Objectives:

- No 'Surface Water' objectives screened-in.
- Sustainable Transport Objectives:
  - ST 05, ST 06, ST 17, ST 21, ST 26 – ST 32.
- Flood Risk Management Objectives:
  - No 'Flood Risk Management' objectives screened-in.

#### **14. CLIMATE CHANGE**

- Climate Change Objectives:
  - CC 07, CC 11 and CC 12.

#### **15. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

- Active Land Management Objectives:
  - AL 01, AL 02, AL 05 and AL 06.

**3.27** The potential impacts from the above objectives on European sites are as follows:

- Indirect loss, habitat fragmentation and severance as a result of potential development within Longford Town particularly along Camlin River.
- Disturbance to qualifying species due to noise, light and human presence on functionally linked habitat.

**3.28** Whilst it is likely that any adverse effects could be successfully avoided through sensitive design and mitigation, there would need to be a commitment to this within the Longford Town LAP to provide certainty. As a result, Likely Significant Effects are predicted and require consideration at the AA stage to determine whether, in light of mitigation and avoidance, they would result in AEol either alone or in-combination.



## AA Screening of impacts on European sites

**3.29** For some types of impacts, screening for Likely Significant Effects was determined on a proximity basis, using GIS data to determine the distance of potential development locations to the European sites that were the subject of the assessment. However, there are many uncertainties associated with using set distances as there are very few standards available as a guide to how far impacts will travel. Therefore, during the Screening stage a number of assumptions were applied in relation to assessing the Likely Significant Effects on European sites that may result from the plan. These are described, where relevant, in the following paragraphs.

### Physical damage/loss (onsite)

**3.30** Any development resulting from the Longford Town LAP would take place within the boundary of Longford Town; therefore, only European sites within the boundary of the respective study area could be affected through physical damage or loss of habitat from within the site boundaries. No European sites are identified within the boundary of Longford Town and therefore, impacts from onsite physical damage and loss from the Longford Town LAP can be screened out from the assessment.

On the above basis, no Likely Significant Effects are predicted to occur in relation to physical damage/loss (onsite) and can therefore be screened out from further assessment.

### Loss of functionally linked habitat

**3.31** Habitat loss from development in areas outside of the European site boundaries may result in Likely Significant Effects where that habitat contributes towards maintaining the interest feature for which the European site is

designated. This includes land that may provide offsite movement corridors or foraging and sheltering habitat for mobile species such as birds, bats, otter and fish. European sites susceptible to the indirect effects of habitat loss are restricted to those sites with qualifying species that rely on offsite habitat. These are identified as follows:

- Ballykenney-Fisherstown Bog SPA
- Glen Lough SPA
- Lough Ree SPA
- Lough Ree SAC

**3.32** A recognised distance for the consideration of offsite functionally linked land in relation to birds is generally 2km, but for certain species, including most notably, golden plover and lapwing, a greater distance of 15km may be appropriate. Based on these distances, Ballykenney-Fisherstown Bog SPA and Glen Lough SPA were screened out from assessment as neither of these sites support golden plover or lapwing and both are located 3km and 14km respectively from Longford Town.

**3.33** The Lough Ree SPA supports golden plover and lapwing as qualifying features. The Lough Ree SPA is located approximately 12km from the Longford Town LAP boundary and therefore there is the potential for the qualifying features of the Lough Ree SPA to rely on functionally linked habitat within the Longford Town LAP boundary.

**3.34** The Lough Ree SAC is also located approximately 12km from the LAP study area and is designated for supporting otter. Otter is primarily found along riparian river corridors and is known to have home ranges that extend over tens of kilometres [See reference 40]. The Lough Ree SAC is hydrologically connected to Longford Town via the River Shannon and Camlin River. Therefore, there is the potential that otter may utilise the Camlin River, depending on the availability of suitable habitat.

**3.35** All other European sites were screened out of the assessment as they do not support qualifying interests that are reliant on offsite functionally linked habitat.

On the above basis, there is the potential for Likely Significant Effects to occur in relation to the loss of functionally linked habitat for the qualifying interests of the Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC. Therefore, it requires further consideration at Appropriate Assessment.

## **Non-physical disturbance (noise, light, vibration)**

**3.36** Noise and vibration effects are most likely to disturb bird species and thus are a key consideration with respect to potential effects on European sites where birds are the qualifying interests. Artificial lighting at night has the potential to affect species where it occurs in close proximity to key habitat areas, such as key roosting sites of SPA birds or SAC bats.

**3.37** It has been assumed that the effects of noise, vibration and light are most likely to be significant within a distance of 500m from the source. There is also evidence of 300m being used as a distance up to which certain bird species can be disturbed by the effects of noise; however, it has been assumed (on a precautionary basis) that the effects of noise, vibration and light pollution are capable of causing an adverse effect if development takes place within 500m of a European site with qualifying interests sensitive to these disturbances.

**3.38** No European sites were identified within the boundary of Longford Town or 500m from the boundary of Longford Town and therefore, impacts from onsite non-physical disturbance from the Longford Town LAP can be screened out from the assessment.

On the above basis, no Likely Significant Effect is predicted to occur in relation to non-physical disturbance and can therefore be screened out from further assessment.

## Non-physical disturbance (functionally linked habitat)

**3.39** Non-physical disturbance may also adversely affect qualifying species at functionally linked habitat. It was established in the 'Loss of functionally linked habitat' section above that the following qualifying species may use functionally linked habitat within Longford Town boundary:

- Bird species of Lough Ree SPA.
- Otter of Lough Ree SAC.

**3.40** Lough Ree SPA and SAC is located approximately 12km from the Longford Town boundary. Therefore, there is the potential that migratory birds to utilise and depend on the availability and connectivity of suitable riparian and wetland habitat in the wider region. Similarly, there is the potential that otters will utilise and depend on the availability and connectivity of suitable riparian and wetland habitat in the wider region.

**3.41** A number of objectives support development along the waterways within Longford Town and therefore could result in non-physical disturbance on functionally linked habitats that the qualifying species of the Lough Ree SPA and SAC rely on. These objectives include ECON 11, TOU 08, TOU 19, TOU 20, TOU 21, REG 12, REG 13, REG 14, REG 15, CSR 11, and GI 07.

On the above basis, there is the potential for Likely Significant Effects to occur in relation to non-physical disturbance (functionally linked habitat only) for the qualifying interests of the Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree

SAC. Therefore, it requires further consideration at Appropriate Assessment.

## Air pollution

**3.42** Air pollution is most likely to affect European sites where plant, soil and water habitats are the qualifying features, but some qualifying animal species may also be affected, either directly or indirectly, by deterioration in habitat as a result of air pollution. Deposition of pollutants to the ground and vegetation can alter the characteristics of the soil, affecting the pH and nitrogen levels, which can affect plant health, productivity and species composition.

**3.43** In terms of the potential effects of air pollution from vehicle traffic on European sites, nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>, i.e. NO and NO<sub>2</sub>) are considered to be key pollutants. Deposition of nitrogen compounds may lead to both soil and freshwater acidification, and NO<sub>x</sub> can cause eutrophication of soils and water.

**3.44** The UK Highways Agency's Design Manual for Road and Bridges (DMRB) document LA 105 Air quality **[See reference 41]** sets out the requirements for assessing and reporting the effects of highway projects on air quality. Paragraph 2.25 of this document provides guidance on selecting sensitive, designated habitat receptors. The National Roads Authority (NRA) DMRB **[See reference 42]** is based on the UK DMRB and is adapted for use to set out a standard of good practice on national roads in Ireland. Based on the guidance set out in the UK DMRB, it is assumed that air pollution from roads is unlikely to be significant beyond 200m from the road itself. Where increases in traffic volumes are forecast, this 200m buffer needs to be applied to the relevant roads in order to make a judgement about the likely geographical extent of air pollution impacts.

**3.45** The DMRB document LA 105 Air quality (paragraph 2.1) also provides criteria that should be applied at the Screening stage of an assessment of a plan or project to ascertain whether there the potential exists for significant air

quality impacts associated with routes or corridors. Based on the DMRB guidance, roads which should be assessed are those where:

- Daily traffic flows will change by 1,000 AADT (Annual Average Daily Traffic) or more; or
- Heavy duty vehicle (HDV) flows will change by 200 AADT or more; or
- There will be a change in speed band (speed banding of traffic modelled speeds for use with air quality assessments); or
- Road alignment will change by 5m or more.

**3.46** As the guidance for Ireland is based on the UK DMRB, it was considered appropriate to consider the impacts of air quality based on the criteria set out above. This is supported by NRA Guidelines for the Treatment of Air Quality During the Planning and Construction of National Road Schemes [See [reference 43](#)]. Although, it should be noted that this guidance was developed in 2011 and further developments have been made to the UK DMRB since. Therefore, the assessment is based on the latest guidance provided by UK DMRB.

**3.47** The following European sites are located within 200m of a strategic road:

- Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA (N4, N5)
- Clooneen Bog SAC (N4)
- Lough Forbes Complex SAC (N4, N5)
- Brown Bog SAC (N5)
- Lough Ree SAC (N63, N6)
- Lough Ree SPA (N63, N6)

**3.48** The Longford Town LAP supports development which could result in an increased use of the N4, N5 and N63. The Longford Town LAP land use zoning map zones areas within the north and east of Longford for new residential development. These areas are located close to the N4. This has the potential to

increase levels of nitrogen oxides, impacting European sites that are located within 200m of one of these strategic roads.

**3.49** Other European sites have been screened out due to their distance of over 200m from either a motorway or an “A” road, or a more minor road considered to be a key part of the Longford Town road network.

On the above basis, there is the potential for Likely Significant Effects to occur in relation to air pollution on the Brown Bog SAC, Lough Forbes Complex SAC, Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA, Lough Ree SPA Clooneen Bog SAC and Lough Ree SAC and therefore it requires further consideration at Appropriate Assessment.

## **Recreational pressure**

**3.50** Recreational activities and human presence can result in significant effects on European sites. European sites with qualifying bird species are likely to be particularly susceptible to recreational disturbances from walking, dog walking, angling, illegal use of off-road vehicles and motorbikes, wildfowling, and water sports. In addition, recreation can physically damage habitat as a result of erosion, trampling, fire or vandalism.

**3.51** European sites with qualifying bird species are likely to be particularly susceptible to recreational disturbances from walking, dog walking, angling, illegal use of off-road vehicles and motorbikes, wildfowling, and water sports. An increase in recreational pressure from development therefore has the potential to disturb bird populations of SPA sites as a result of both terrestrial and water-based recreation.

**3.52** The Longford Town LAP supports a range of development including residential, employment, community facilities, tourism facilities and green infrastructure and therefore there is the potential for increased recreational

pressure on these European sites and their qualifying features. European sites within the study area would be most affected by an increase in recreational pressure as a result of the implementation of the Longford Town LAP, however, there are no European sites within the Longford Town boundary.

**3.53** Lough Ree SAC is located approximately 12km from the Longford Town boundary, however, the qualifying features of this SAC are vulnerable to recreational impacts. In particular, an increase in leisure fishing, nautical sports and hunting have the potential to impact the qualifying features of Lough Ree SAC. This vulnerability is ranked medium. Lough Ree SPA supports a number of migratory birds which are qualifying features of this SPA. These bird species are highly susceptible to recreational impacts from nautical sports, leisure fishing, hunting and walking, horse riding and non-motorised vehicles.

**3.54** Lough Forbes Complex SAC and Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA support qualifying features such as the Greenland White-fronted Goose which are vulnerable to recreational pressures such as leisure fishing and hunting. However, there vulnerability is ranked low.

**3.55** Therefore, as a precaution, it has not been possible to rule out likely significant effects for the above European sites in relation to recreational pressure. All other European sites did not have qualifying features that were vulnerable to impacts from recreational pressure and were therefore scoped out of further assessment.

On the above basis, there is the potential for Likely Significant Effects to occur in relation to recreational pressure on the Lough Forbes Complex SAC, Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA, Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC and therefore it requires further consideration at Appropriate Assessment.



## Changes in hydrology (water quality and quantity)

**3.56** Changes to hydrology have the potential to negatively impact habitats and reduce prey availability for the qualifying interests of European sites. Depending on the qualifying features and particular vulnerabilities of the European sites, this could result in Likely Significant Effects, for example, due to changes in environmental or biotic conditions, water chemistry and the extent and distribution of preferred habitat conditions. Any development that results in an increase in population could result in higher levels of water abstraction and a negative impact on nearby European sites.

**3.57** Given the distance and lack of direct hydrological connectivity, no Likely Significant Effects were considered in relation to the following European sites:

- Glen Lough SPA
- Brown Bog SAC
- Mount Jessop Bog SAC
- Clooneen Bog SAC
- Argagullion Bog SAC

**3.58** The Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA is hydrologically connected to Longford Town via the River Shannon and Camlin River. The Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA covers Lough Forbes. Lough Forbes provides drinking water to the Longford Central public water supply. The Longford Town LAP objectives support a variety of development which could increase water abstraction levels.

**3.59** The Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC are hydrologically connected to Longford Town via the River Shannon and Camlin River. The main threat to Lough Ree comes from artificial enrichment of the water by agricultural and domestic waste. This can restrict aquatic flora within shallow waters. The

Longford Town LAP could result in an increase in domestic waste through supporting development in particular residential development.

**3.60** Fortwilliam Turlough SAC is situated close to the eastern shore of Lough Ree approximately 14km from the Longford Town boundary. The qualifying features of Fortwilliam Turlough SAC which are turloughs are susceptible to impacts from an increase in groundwater abstraction for public water supply. However, this vulnerability is ranked low. Any development that results in an increase in population could result in higher levels of water abstraction and a negative impact on the Fortwilliam Turlough SAC.

**3.61** The Lough Forbes Complex SAC is hydrologically connected to Longford Town via the River Shannon and Camlin River. Lough Forbes provides drinking water to the Longford Central public water supply. Lough Forbes Complex SAC and its qualifying features are vulnerable to groundwater abstractions for public water supply. Therefore, any development that results in an increase in population could result in higher levels of water abstraction and a negative impact on the Lough Forbes Complex SAC.

On the above basis, there is the potential for Likely Significant Effects to occur in relation to changes to hydrology on the Lough Forbes Complex SAC, Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA, Fortwilliam Turlough SAC, Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC and therefore it requires further consideration at Appropriate Assessment.

## Summary of findings of Screening Assessment

**Table 3.2** summarises the Screening conclusions reached in this Screening for AA. Impact types for which a conclusion of No Likely Significant Effect (LSE) was reached are shown with no colour. Those potential impacts where LSEs cannot be ruled out are shown in orange and these are considered in more detail at the Appropriate Assessment stage in **Chapter 4**.

**Table 3.2: Summary of screening assessment**

European site	Physical damage/loss (onsite)	Loss of functionally linked habitat	Non-physical disturbance	Air pollution	Recreational pressure	Changes in hydrology (water quality and quantity)
Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	Potential LSE	Potential LSE	Potential LSE
Glen Lough SPA	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE
Lough Ree SPA	No LSE	Potential LSE	Potential LSE (offsite only)	Potential LSE	Potential LSE	Potential LSE
Lough Ree SAC	No LSE	Potential LSE	Potential LSE (offsite only)	Potential LSE	Potential LSE	Potential LSE
Brown Bog SAC	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	Potential LSE	No LSE	No LSE
Mount Jessop Bog SAC	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE
Lough Forbes Complex SAC	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	Potential LSE	Potential LSE	Potential LSE
Clooneen Bog SAC	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	Potential LSE	No LSE	No LSE

### Chapter 3     Stage 1: Screening

European site	Physical damage/loss (onsite)	Loss of functionally linked habitat	Non-physical disturbance	Air pollution	Recreational pressure	Changes in hydrology (water quality and quantity)
Fortwilliam Turlough SAC	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	Potential LSE
Argagullion Bog SAC	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE	No LSE

## Screening conclusion

**3.62** An initial screening of the Longford Town LAP, using the precautionary principle (without the application of mitigation measures) and the Source/Pathway/Receptor links between the Longford Town LAP and European sites was carried out with the findings presented in **Table 3.2**.

**3.63** Based on best scientific knowledge and objective information and assessment, the possibility of significant effects caused by the Longford Town LAP was excluded for the following European sites:

- Glen Lough SPA
- Mount Jessop Bog SAC
- Argagullion Bog SAC

**3.64** An Appropriate Assessment is required for the Lough Ree SPA, Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA, Brown Bog SAC, Lough Forbes Complex SAC, Clooneen Bog SAC, Fortwilliam Turlough SAC and Lough Ree SAC as the implementation of the Longford Town LAP has the potential to result in the following impacts:

- Loss of functionally linked habitat.
- Non-physical disturbance (offsite only).
- Air pollution.
- Recreational impacts.
- Changes to hydrology including water quality and quantity.

## Screening Statement

In line with the Screening Statements defined in the 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities' [See reference 44], it is concluded that **there is potential for significant effects / Appropriate Assessment is required for the Longford Town LAP.**

## Chapter 4

# Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment – Natura Impact Statement

**4.1** This chapter comprises the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) which sets out the Appropriate Assessment of the Longford Town LAP.

**4.2** The Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment assesses whether the Longford Town LAP alone, or in-combination with other plans or projects, would result in adverse impacts on the integrity of seven European sites brought forward from Screening (see **Table 3.2**), with respect to site structure, function and/or conservation objectives.

## Characterisation of European sites potentially affected

**4.3** The AA Screening identified Source/Pathway/Receptor links between the Longford Town LAP and seven European sites:

- Lough Ree SPA.
- Lough Ree SAC.
- Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA.
- Brown Bog SAC.
- Lough Forbes Complex SAC.
- Clooneen Bog SAC.
- Fortwilliam Turlough SAC.

**4.4 Appendix D** characterises each of the qualifying interests of the European sites brought forward from Stage 1 in context of each of the site's vulnerabilities.

## Identifying and characterising potential significant effects

**4.5** Outlined below are the parameters used to characterise impacts on European sites from the implementation of the Longford Town LAP.

### AA assessment criteria

#### ■ Direct and indirect impacts

- An impact can be caused either as a direct or as an indirect consequence of a plans or projects.

#### ■ Likelihood and duration of the impacts

- Likelihood
  - Low – Not likely to have an impact.
  - Medium.
  - High – Highly likely to have an impact.
- Duration
  - Temporary – up to one year.
  - Short-term – up to 2025.
  - Medium-term – up to 2030 (Longford Town LAP period).
  - Long-term – beyond 2030 (beyond Longford Town LAP period).

#### ■ Magnitude of the impacts

- High – High proportion of the receptor affected.



- Medium.
- Low – Low proportion of the receptor affected.
- **Ecologically significant impact**
  - An impact (negative or positive) on the integrity of a defined site or ecosystem and/or the conservation status of habitats or species within a given geographic area.
- **Integrity of a site**
  - The coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, which enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was classified.

**4.6** Likely Significant Effects arising from the Longford Town LAP, either alone or in-combination, were identified for the following sites and impact types:

- **Loss of functionally linked land** - in relation to Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC.
- **Non-physical disturbance (offsite only)** – in relation to the Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC.
- **Air pollution** – in relation to Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA, Lough Ree SPA, Lough Ree SAC, Brown Bog SAC, Lough Forbes Complex SAC, and Clooneen Bog SAC.
- **Recreational pressure** – in relation to Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA, Lough Ree SPA, Lough Ree SAC, and Lough Forbes Complex SAC.
- **Changes to hydrology including water quality and quantity** – in relation to Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA, Lough Ree SPA, Lough Ree SAC and Fortwilliam Turlough SAC.

**4.7** Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken for these European sites to determine whether the Longford Town LAP will result in Adverse Effects on Integrity (AEoI) for these European sites.

**4.8** The Appropriate Assessment focuses on those impacts that are judged likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of a European site, or where insufficient certainty regarding this remained at the screening stage. As described in **Chapter 2**, a conclusion needs to be reached as to whether or not an objective in the Longford Town LAP would adversely affect the integrity of a European site. To reach a conclusion, consideration was given to whether the predicted impacts of the objectives (either alone or in-combination) have the potential to:

- Delay the achievement of conservation objectives for the site.
- Interrupt progress towards the achievement of conservation objectives for the site.
- Disrupt factors that help to maintain the favourable conditions of the site.
- Interfere with the balance, distribution and density of key species that are the indicators of the favourable condition of the site.

**4.9** The conservation objectives for the above European sites are to ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and to ensure that the site contributes to achieving the 'favourable conservation status' of its qualifying interests by maintaining or restoring:

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats.
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats.
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species.
- The populations of qualifying species.
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

## Loss of functionally linked habitat

**4.10** The AA Screening identified that the Longford Town LAP has the potential to result in the loss of functionally linked habitat in relation to Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC. Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC are located approximately 12km from the Longford Town study area. The SPA supports an array of wintering and breeding birds including the Golden plover with the SAC supporting otters.

**4.11** The Longford Town LAP sets out the overall strategy for sustainable development within Longford Town, including the development of 1,304 new homes and the zoning of 197 hectares of land for employment in the town. The Longford Town LAP supports development including residential, employment, transport and infrastructure through objectives in the following sections of the LAP: Core Strategy; Economic Development; Retail; Tourism; Regeneration and Placemaking; Master Planning – Strategic Sites; Education, Childcare and Health Facilities; Social Infrastructure; Green Infrastructure; Protected Structures; Architectural Conservation Area; Archaeological Heritage; Energy, Communications and Waste; Water Supply and Wastewater Services; Sustainable Transport and Active Land Management. Without the implementation of mitigation measures, this may result in the loss of functionally linked habitat for the qualifying features of the SPA and SAC.

## Mitigation

**4.12** Several recommendations were made in an internal draft of this report to strengthen the mitigation provided in the LAP. These recommended mitigation measures, detailed in the table overleaf, were subsequently included in the Draft LAP and provide assurance that any loss of functionally linked habitat will not adversely affect the integrity of the Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC.

**Table 4.1: AA recommended mitigation for loss of functionally linked land**

Draft LAP Objective	AA Recommendation	Addressed in the LAP
Recommend a new objective is included in the 'Natural Heritage and Biodiversity' section of the LAP.	<i>“Require an ecological appraisal, in addition to an Appropriate Assessment, for development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of European Sites, or a proposed European Site and which are likely to have significant effects on that site either individually or cumulatively”.</i>	A new objective, NHB 05, was included in the Draft LAP as recommended in the AA.
NHB 04 Ensure screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA), in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive is carried out with respect to any plan or project within or adjacent to the Royal Canal pNHA.	Objective NHB 04 could be strengthened to encompass any plan or project that is likely to have a significant impact on the Royal Canal pNHA as well as the River Camlin as this links to the Lough Forbes Complex SAC / Ballykenny Bog SPA:  <i>NHB 04 Require screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA), in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, to be carried out with respect to any plan or project which may have a likely significant impact on the River Camlin and Royal Canal pNHA.</i>	Objective NHB 04 was updated to incorporate the AA recommended mitigation.

**4.13** Additional objectives in the Longford Town LAP provide safeguards and mitigation measures from the loss of functionally liked habitat, specifically:

- **NHB 01** Comply with the Natural Heritage Objectives contained in Chapter 12: Natural Heritage & Environment of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- **NHB 02** Implement where relevant the County Longford Heritage Plan and Longford Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2024.
- **NHB 03** Protect, conserve and enhance Longford's biodiversity and natural heritage that includes wildlife (flora and fauna), habitats and landscapes of importance to wildlife, particularly along the Royal Canal pNHA and Camlin River.
- **NHB 09** Ensure the provision of appropriate Riparian strips of not less than 10 meters from the top of the bank of all watercourses to enhance biodiversity and preserve the natural flood regime of the area. The full extent of the biodiversity protection zone should be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Council, based on site specific characteristics and sensitivities.
- **NHB 10** Support restoration and conservation works to protect and enhance water quality of the Camlin River and the (pNHA) Royal Canal and the associated biodiversity value of riverbanks.
- **NHB 16** Require mitigating measures in certain cases where it is evident that biodiversity is likely to be affected. These measures may, in association with other specified requirements, include establishment of wildlife areas/corridors/parks, tree planting, wildflower meadows/marshes and other areas.

**4.14** Additional safeguards and mitigation measures are provided within the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027, specifically:

- **CPO12.1** Protect, conserve and enhance to the County's natural heritage and biodiversity. This includes wildlife (flora and fauna), habitats, landscapes and/or landscape features of importance to wildlife, or which play a key role in the conservation and management of natural resources.

- **CPO12.5** Protect and conserve the conservation value of Special Areas of Conservation, candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas and any other sites that may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan.
- **CPO12.6** Ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European Sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects). Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive; in so far as there must be – (a) no alternative solution available, (b) imperative reasons of an overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and (c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.
- **CPO12.7** Ensure that any plan or project that could have a significant adverse impact (either by themselves or in combination with other plans and projects) upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 Site or would result in the deterioration of any habitat or any species reliant on that habitat will not be permitted. Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive; in so far as there must be – (a) no alternative solution available (b) imperative reasons of an overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and (c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.
- **CPO12.8** Ensure that all development proposals relating to European Sites will comply with the DoECLG publication ‘Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland- Guidance for Planning Authorities’.
- **CPO12.9** Ensure an Appropriate Assessment is carried out in respect of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of a European Site(s), either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, in view of the site’s conservation objectives to comply with the Habitats Directive.

- **CPO12.10** Permit development on or adjacent to designated Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, Statutory Nature Reserves or those proposed to be designated over the period of the Plan, only where an appropriate level of assessment can clearly demonstrate that it will have no significant adverse effect on the integrity of the site.
- **CPO12.11** Consult and have regard to the views and guidance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in respect of proposed development where there is a possibility that such development may have an impact on a designated European or National site, or a site proposed for such designation.
- **CPO12.13** Undertake appropriate surveys and collect data to provide an evidence-base to assist the Council in meeting its obligations under Article 6 of the Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) subject to available resources.
- **CPO12.14** Prepare Strategic Habitat Management Plans for European Sites in the County in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and relevant stakeholders.
- **CPO12.15** Require an ecological appraisal, in addition to an Appropriate Assessment, for development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of European Sites, or a proposed European Site and which are likely to have significant effects on that site either individually or cumulatively.
- **CPO12.16** Ensure that no plan, programme, or project giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan, either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects.
- **CPO12.17** Require an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) for any proposed development which may have a significant impact on rare, threatened and or protected species and non-designated habitats of biodiversity value.

## Conclusion

Providing the above mitigation measures are implemented successfully, Adverse Effects on the Integrity (AEoI) of the Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC, as a result of loss of functionally linked habitat will be avoided.

### Non-physical disturbance (offsite only)

**4.15** The AA Screening identified that the Longford Town LAP has the potential to result in non-physical disturbance (noise, light, vibration) in relation to the Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC.

**4.16** The Longford Town LAP supports development including residential, employment, transport and infrastructure through objectives in the following sections of the LAP: Core Strategy; Economic Development; Retail; Tourism; Regeneration and Placemaking; Master Planning – Strategic Sites; Education, Childcare and Health Facilities; Social Infrastructure; Green Infrastructure; Protected Structures; Architectural Conservation Area; Archaeological Heritage; Energy, Communications and Waste; Water Supply and Wastewater Services; Sustainable Transport and Active Land Management. Without the implementation of mitigation measures, there is potential for disturbance to the qualifying species in the Lough Ree SPA and SAC. Disturbance to key species of the SPA will be short-term and temporary during construction of new developments however, there is potential for effects from disturbance via noise, vibration, lighting and human presence as a result of development and use of these facilities.

## Mitigation

**4.17** Several recommendations were made in an internal draft of this report to strengthen the mitigation provided in the LAP. These recommended mitigation



measures, detailed in the table below, were subsequently included in the Draft LAP and provide assurance that non-physical disturbance (offsite only) will not adversely affect the integrity of the Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC.

**Table 4.2: AA recommended mitigation for non-physical disturbance**

Draft LAP Objective	AA Recommendation	Addressed in the LAP
Recommend a new objective is included in the 'Natural Heritage and Biodiversity' section of the LAP.	<i>"Require an ecological appraisal, in addition to an Appropriate Assessment, for development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of European Sites, or a proposed European Site and which are likely to have significant effects on that site either individually or cumulatively".</i>	A new objective, NHB 05, was included in the Draft LAP as recommended in the AA.
Objective NHB 21 (previously NHB 20 in internal draft) ensures that proposals for the lighting/flood lighting of waterways infrastructure, buildings or pedestrian/cycling routes along waterways incorporate bat friendly lighting schemes.	It is recommended that this objective is strengthened as follows: <i><u>"Ensure that proposals for the lighting/flood lighting of waterways infrastructure, buildings or pedestrian/cycling routes along waterways minimise adverse impacts on protected species (e.g. bats, birds, otters, etc.) and incorporate lighting schemes as set out in 'Bats and Lighting, Guidance Notes for: Planners, engineers,</u></i>	Objective updated to incorporate AA recommended mitigation.

Draft LAP Objective	AA Recommendation	Addressed in the LAP
	<u>architects, and developers</u> .	

**4.18** Additional safeguards and mitigation measures are provided within the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027, specifically:

- **CPO12.6** Ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European Sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects). Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive; in so far as there must be – (a) no alternative solution available, (b) imperative reasons of an overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and (c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.
- **CPO12.7** Ensure that any plan or project that could have a significant adverse impact (either by themselves or in combination with other plans and projects) upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 Site or would result in the deterioration of any habitat or any species reliant on that habitat will not be permitted. Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive; in so far as there must be – (a) no alternative solution available (b) imperative reasons of an overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and (c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.
- **CPO12.12** Identify and provide appropriate buffer zones between Designated Sites and local biodiversity features and areas zoned for development.
- **CPO12.111** Require all developments to be designed and operated in a manner that will minimise and contain noise levels, including the use of noise / vibration attenuation measures as appropriate.

- **CPO12.112** Require the submission of a Noise Impact Assessment for all developments likely to introduce noise generating uses in proximity to noise sensitive uses.
- **CPO12.113** Control lighting in urban and rural areas and in particular in sensitive locations, in order to minimise impacts on residential amenity, habitats and species of importance.

## Conclusion

Providing the above mitigation measures are implemented successfully, Adverse Effects on the Integrity (AEoI) of the Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC, as a result of offsite non-physical disturbance will be avoided.

## Air pollution

**4.19** Developments and population increases can lead to increased use of the road network by vehicles and in turn have an adverse effect on air quality. The AA Screening identified that the Longford Town LAP has the potential to result in impacts on air pollution in relation to the Ballykenny-Fishertown SPA, Lough Ree SPA and SAC, Brown Bog SPA, Lough Forbes Complex SAC, and Clooneen Bog SAC.

**4.20** The Longford Town LAP sets out the overall strategy for sustainable development within Longford Town, including the development of 1,304 new homes and the zoning of 197 hectares of land for employment in the town. The Longford Town LAP supports development including residential, employment, transport and infrastructure through objectives in the following sections of the LAP: Core Strategy; Economic Development; Retail; Tourism; Regeneration and Placemaking; Master Planning – Strategic Sites; Education, Childcare and Health Facilities; Social Infrastructure; Green Infrastructure; Protected Structures; Architectural Conservation Area; Archaeological Heritage; Energy,

Communications and Waste; Water Supply and Wastewater Services; Sustainable Transport and Active Land Management. Without the implementation of mitigation measures, the additional traffic generated from these developments may have adverse effects on the qualifying species of the above listed SPAs and SACs, particularly from the development of transport infrastructure to support the Abbeycartron Access Strategy (ST 25 – ST 30) and the N4 Mullingar-Roskeel dual carriageway (ST 21 – ST 24).

## Mitigation

**4.21** Minimising air quality impacts was not explicitly covered within the Draft Longford Town LAP. Therefore, the internal draft of the AA recommended that the following objective is included in the LAP:

- *'Promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC) and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011) (or any updated/superseding documents).'*

**4.22** A new objective, CC 17, was subsequently included in the LAP which reflects the aforementioned recommended mitigation.

**4.23** The Longford Town LAP has been informed by the Longford Town Local Transport Plan. The Longford Town LTP contains strategies which include a number of proposed schemes: pedestrian schemes; cycle schemes; quiet streets; bicycle parking schemes; permeability schemes; public transport schemes; traffic management schemes; and, car parking schemes within Longford Town, which are reflected in the LAP. The Longford Town LAP strongly supports compact development in the town centre and the enhancement of the sustainable and active travel networks. This will reduce the need to travel by private car and provide more sustainable travel options for people within Longford Town:

- **CS 03** Support and facilitate compact growth through the sustainable intensification and consolidation of the town centre and established residential areas.
- **CS 04** Encourage the compact growth of Longford Town and undertake a town centre first approach to ensure that development proceeds sustainably and at an appropriate scale, density and sequence and in line with the County Core Strategy Table.
- **ST 04** Management of space in town centres to deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport modes to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe, places to work, live, shop and engage in community life.
- **ST 05** Seek to implement enhanced pedestrian and cycling permeability and networks in the urban environment of Longford Town in accordance with the provisions of the LTP, the Design Manual of Urban Roads and Streets, (DMURS) (DTTS and DECLG, 2020), the Permeability Best Practice Guidelines, (NTA, 2013) and the National Cycle Manual (NTA, 2011).
- **ST 06** Seek to implement pedestrian and cycling improvements with the assistance of the NTA through the Green Schools Programme and Sustainable Transport Measures Grants Scheme.
- **ST 08** Encourage larger employers within the town and applications for planning permission to establish employment generating premises to develop mobility management plans to promote sustainable travel choices. This will include measures to support smarter travel such as the provision of cycle facilities and bicycle storage and shower facilities for employees.
- **ST 09** Ensure new development areas and employment land-uses are permeable for walking and cycling and are laid out in such a way as to facilitate the operation of and access to public transport by residents and employees.
- **ST 10** Ensure that the layout and design of new developments provide for bus stops, passenger waiting facilities, and bus turning and service regulatory layover facilities, as required.

- **ST 11** Support and develop public transport routes throughout the town through collaboration with the National Transport Authority.
- **ST 12** Retrospectively provide public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure and facilities in existing development areas to achieve growth in sustainable mobility.
- **ST 13** Provide suitable infrastructure on public transport corridors to improve safety and efficiency for public transport users.
- **ST 14** Engage and cooperate with the Department of Transport, National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Irish Rail, Local Link and other stakeholders to improve the provision of public transport and public transport facilities in Longford.
- **ST 15** Support the NTA in the provision of new and upgraded bus stops in Longford Town).
- **ST 16** Support the development of an integrated transport hub within the town, which serves the county and for the promotion of public transport connectivity between Longford 'Key' town and other towns and villages.
- **ST 17** Seek the development of effective cycling infrastructure along the key urban arterial routes to and from Longford Town:
  - (R198 – Battery Road/Church Street/Bridge Street;
  - R393 – Dublin Road; and
  - the N63 – Ballinalee Road);in order to coincide with key employment areas, public transport hubs and schools within Longford Town.
- **ST 18** Support the provision of electrical charging infrastructure both on street and in new developments in accordance with car parking standards prescribed in Chapter 16: *Development Management Standards of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027*.
- **ST 19** Liaise and collaborate with relevant agencies to support the growth of EVs with support facilities and infrastructure through a roll-out of additional electrical charging infrastructure at appropriate locations in the town.

- **ST 20** Support the prioritisation of parking for Electric Vehicles (EVs) in town centre locations.
- **SST 32** Support and facilitate the implementation of the pedestrian, cycle, public transport, car parking, traffic management, and permeability 'Priority Schemes' set out in the Local Transport Plan. Proposals for new development will be required to demonstrate how they will integrate with the provisions of the Local Transport Plan.

**4.24** Additional safeguards and mitigation measures are provided within the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027, specifically:

- **CPO12.6** Ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European Sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects). Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive; in so far as there must be – (a) no alternative solution available, (b) imperative reasons of an overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and (c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.
- **CPO12.7** Ensure that any plan or project that could have a significant adverse impact (either by themselves or in combination with other plans and projects) upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 Site or would result in the deterioration of any habitat or any species reliant on that habitat will not be permitted. Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive; in so far as there must be – (a) no alternative solution available (b) imperative reasons of an overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and (c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.
- **CPO5.45** Ensure new development areas and employment land-uses are permeable for walking and cycling and are laid out in such a way as to facilitate the operation of and access to public transport by residents and employees.



- **CPO5.46** Ensure that the layout and design of new developments provide for bus stops, passenger waiting facilities, and bus turning and service regulatory layover facilities, as required.
- **CPO5.47** Support and develop public transport routes throughout the County through collaboration with the National Transport Authority.
- **CPO5.48** Retrospectively provide public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure and facilities in existing development areas to achieve growth in sustainable mobility.
- **CPO5.51** Support the continued integration of national, regional and local bus and rail services to ensure the delivery of a fully integrated public transport service.
- **CPO5.52** Improve access to public transport as part of road improvement projects, where possible.
- **CPO 5.53** Seek to address urban congestion, with particular emphasis on facilitating improved bus transport movement and reliability, and improved links to bus and railway stations.
- **CPO5.55** Support the operation of existing bus services and facilitate the provision of improved facilities for bus users in towns and villages including the provision, in collaboration with the relevant agencies, of set down areas for coaches and bus shelters for passengers.
- **CPO5.56** Support bus priority measures on existing and planned road infrastructure, where appropriate, in collaboration with the National Transport Authority, Bus Éireann and the Transport Infrastructure Ireland.
- **CPO5.57** Facilitate the provision of park and ride facilities in appropriate locations within convenient reach of transport nodes and along strategic transport corridors.
- **CPO5.59** Facilitate the expansion and development of existing and any future proposed rail facilities and supporting infrastructure within the county.
- **CPO12.104** Promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive



(2008/5/0/EC) and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 201) (or any updated/superseding documents).

- **CPO12.105** Support the collation of air quality and greenhouse gas monitoring data in support of a regional air quality and greenhouse gas emission inventory.
- **CPO12.106** Seek to ensure in tandem with the EPA, that all developments are operated in a manner that does not contribute to deterioration in air quality.
- **CPO12.107** Promote alternative and sustainable transport methods in order to maintain good air quality and support the introduction of charging points for electric vehicles (EVs) throughout the county and will seek to replace its fleet with EVs where feasible.
- **CPO12.108** Promote the retention of trees, in-particular broad leaf-species, hedgerows and other vegetation where possible, and encourage afforestation and tree planting as a means of air purification and filtering.

## Conclusion

Providing the above mitigation measures are implemented successfully, Adverse Effects on the Integrity (AEol) of the Ballykenny-Fishertown SPA, Lough Ree SPA, Brown Bog SPA, Lough Forbes Complex SAC, Clooneen Bog SAC and Lough Ree SAC as a result of air pollution will be avoided.

## Recreational impacts

**4.25** The AA Screening identified that the Longford Town LAP has the potential to result in recreation pressure in relation to the Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA, Lough Ree SPA, Lough Forbes Complex SAC and Lough Ree SAC. The

Longford Town LAP supports residential development within Longford Town of 1,304 new homes which could increase the population resulting in increased recreational pressure on these European sites.

**4.26** The Lough Ree SAC supports otters which are vulnerable to recreational impacts such as leisure fishing, nautical sports and hunting. Lough Ree SPA which supports a number of migratory birds which are qualifying features of this SPA. These bird species are highly susceptible to recreational impacts from nautical sports, leisure fishing, hunting and walking, horse riding and non-motorised vehicles.

**4.27** Lough Forbes Complex SAC contains the following qualifying features; natural eutrophic lakes, active raised bogs, degraded raised bogs, alluvial forests and depressions on peat substrates. These qualifying features support an array of bird species including the merlin and the Whopper Swan. The Lough Forbes is connected to Longford Town via the River Shannon and Camlin River. The site synopsis [\[See reference 45\]](#) for Lough Forbes Complex SAC states that ‘there are no known threats to the wintering birds though the increased use of the River Shannon system by leisure craft’. Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA supports the Greenland White-fronted Goose which is vulnerable to recreational pressures such as leisure fishing and hunting. These activities could have an impact on food availability for the qualifying features of these European sites.

**4.28** Some types of fishing such as trout angling, is strictly regulated with restrictions in relation to the type and number of trout that can be taken. In addition, a number of fish such as salmon, sea trout, sea bass, molluscs, eels and all freshwater fish are protected in Ireland. This means that a license is required to fish for sea trout and salmon in Ireland.

## Mitigation

**4.29** It is recognised that the waterways within and around Longford Town including the Camlin River and the River Shannon offer potential in relation to tourism development and recreational activities. Therefore, it is recommended

that the Longford Town LAP coordinates proposals proposed along the waterways, helping to avoid the most sensitive areas the qualifying features of the European sites may rely on. It was also recommended in the internal draft of the AA that a new objective is included in the Natural Heritage and Biodiversity section:

- *“Ensure the provision of appropriate Riparian strips of not less than 10 meters from the top of the bank of all watercourses to enhance biodiversity and preserve the natural flood regime of the area. The full extent of the biodiversity protection zone should be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Council, based on site specific characteristics and sensitivities”.*

**4.30** A new objective, NHB 09, was subsequently included in the LAP which reflects the aforementioned recommended mitigation.

**4.31** The Longford Town LAP contains a number of objectives under the ‘Green Infrastructure’ section which support the creation of new green infrastructure and areas for recreation. This has the potential to reduce recreational pressure on European sites. Some of these objectives also aim to protect the waterways within Longford Town. These include:

- **GI 01** Protect, enhance and further develop the Green Infrastructure network in Longford town to provide a shared space for amenity, recreation and biodiversity to thrive and to strengthen links to the wider regional network. This should be informed by appropriate ecological surveys and assessment.
- **GI 02** Reduce fragmentation of the existing green infrastructure network while protecting and enhancing its biodiversity by strengthening ecological links including stepping-stone habitats (according to their value).
- **GI 03** Integrate new and existing green infrastructure as an essential component of all new developments and to restrict development that would fragment, damage or prejudice the integrity of the green infrastructure network. Site specific ecology surveys should be carried out to inform proposed developments.

- **GI 04** Seek to provide open space and recreation facilities in the Plan area by creating a network of open spaces and creating connectivity between these to form a nature wildlife corridor.
- **GI 05** Ensure the key green infrastructure and habitat features identified in Potential Green Infrastructure Projects Map, and the linkages they provide to larger areas of green infrastructure and the wider countryside are retained and integrated into the design of new developments as far as practicable.
- **GI 06** Protect, enhance, create and connect natural heritage, high-quality amenity areas and other green spaces throughout Longford Town for both biodiversity and recreational use. Promote links with any further designated walking, cycling and wildlife routes existing or proposed throughout the County.
- **GI 07** Preserve, protect and enhance the Royal Canal and Camlin River as important amenity and recreational resources. Walkway development will be promoted, particularly in the vicinity of the Canal and the Camlin River. Require retention or creation of public access to the waterways in order to facilitate the creation or expansion of walking/cycling routes.
- **GI 08** Protect, enhance and improve existing public rights of way where appropriate and investigate the provision of additional rights of way, parking and lay-be facilities where appropriate through agreement with existing landowners and through the development management process.
- **GI 09** Seek that development proposals also include an outline of measures to protect the retained green infrastructure of a site during the period of construction.
- **GI 10** Provide for wildlife bridges (eco links) as part of any new pedestrian and cycle links across the River Camlin, the Royal Canal and railway, thereby facilitating the free movement of people and species throughout the Plan area.
- **GI 11** Promote a network of pedestrian and cycle paths to enhance accessibility to the green infrastructure network, while ensuring that the design and operation of the routes responds to ecological protection needs.

- **GI 12** Incorporate items of historical or heritage importance within the Green Infrastructure network as amenity features, where practical.

**4.32** Objectives in the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 also provide safeguards and mitigation measures from recreational pressure, specifically:

- **CPO12.69** Maintain a biodiversity zone of not less than 10 metres from the top of the bank of all watercourses in the county, with the full extent of the protection zone to be determined on a case by case basis by the Council, based on site specific characteristics and sensitivities. (Agriculture, native tree forestry, appropriate public amenity and recreational projects (Including the provision of slipways and angling infrastructure) and strategic Green Routes / Blueways / Trails will be open for consideration within the biodiversity protection zone, subject to appropriate safeguards and assessments).
- **CPO7.42** Support the development of recreation and open space in accordance with the EMRA RSES Recreation and Open Space Guiding Principles and Guiding Principles for Healthy Placemaking.
- **CPO7.43** Promote the development of a wide variety of high quality accessible open space areas, for both active and passive use, and formal and informal activities in accordance with the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy.
- **CPO13.1** Develop the green infrastructure network to ensure the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, including:
  - the protection of European Sites;
  - the provision of accessible parks, open spaces and recreational facilities (including allotments and community gardens);
  - the sustainable management of water;
  - the maintenance of landscape character including historic landscape character;
  - the protection and enhancement of the architectural and archaeological heritage.

- Any new greenway, blueway and peatway projects shall comply with CPO 5.15 in relation to Infrastructure corridor and route selection processes.
- **CPO13.2** Seek a net gain in green infrastructure through:
  - the protection and enhancement of existing assets;
  - the provision of new green infrastructure as an integral part of the planning process;
  - taking forward priority projects including preparing green infrastructure maps during the lifetime of the Development Plan.
- **CPO13.5** Facilitate the conservation and enhancement of significant non-designated areas containing ecological importance and located in green corridors.
- **CPO13.10** Facilitate the ongoing development and improvement of green infrastructure, including green networks, green amenities and linked green corridors which ensure the provision of natural areas for the growth of wildlife and biodiversity.
- **CPO13.11** Develop a green infrastructure network for urban areas, connecting both natural and seminatural corridors including green spaces, open spaces, rivers and canals. Enhancements along natural features may include the provision of riparian buffers and wild areas for pollination.
- **CPO13.15** Support the delivery of sustainable strategic Greenways, Blueways and Peatways projects in the County in accordance with the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways.
- **CPO13.16** Develop an integrated network of Blueways both within County Longford and to adjoining counties.
- **CPO13.19** Support the development of an integrated Strategic Greenway Network of national and regional routes and maximise connectivity to existing greenways through linkages of cycling and walking infrastructure.
- **CPO13.20** Protect, enhance and preserve the built and natural heritage of the Royal Canal and its associated structures including the maintenance of

the broadzone at 100m either side of the Canal. This shall include the natural setting of the canal and its views and prospects.

- **CPO13.21** Proposals for greenway/blueway development should contribute towards the protection or enhancement of existing green infrastructure and have regard to the “Connecting with nature for health and wellbeing” EPA Research Report 2020.

**4.33** The mitigation provided above is considered to be sufficient to avoid significant adverse effects on the integrity of the European sites, however, as an additional mitigation measure, Longford County Council could consider requiring the preparation of a Recreational Mitigation Strategy for planning applications that propose development along the waterways within Longford Town to minimise any adverse effects on European site.

## Conclusion

Providing the above mitigation measures are implemented successfully, Adverse Effects on the Integrity (AEol) of the Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA, Lough Ree SPA, Lough Ree SAC and Lough Forbes Complex SAC as a result of recreational pressure will be avoided.

## Changes to hydrology including water quality and quantity

**4.34** The increased population and scale of development proposed within the Longford Town LAP could increase the demand for water abstraction and increase the risk of pollution of watercourses and groundwater. Hydrological alterations may also occur through the potential diversion of flows and implementation of SuDs and natural flood risk management measures that are used for sustainable development and growth. The AA Screening identified that

the Longford Town LAP has the potential to result in changes to hydrology (water quality and quantity) in relation to the Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA, Lough Ree SPA, Lough Ree SAC and Fortwilliam Turlough SAC.

**4.35** The Government of Ireland is currently preparing an update to the River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027 [See reference 46]. The Draft River Basin Management Plan identifies that the following pressures are having the most significant impact on Ireland’s waters:

- Agricultural pressures.
- Hydromorphological pressures (physical alterations).
- Urban Surface Water Run-off pressures.
- Pressures from Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems.

## Mitigation

**4.36** Several recommendations were made in an internal draft of this report to strengthen the mitigation provided in the LAP. These recommended mitigation measures, detailed in the table below, were subsequently included in the Draft LAP and will minimise adverse effects on European sites from changes to hydrology.

**Table 4.3: AA recommended mitigation for hydrology**

Draft LAP Objective	AA Recommendation	Addressed in the LAP
Recommend a new objective is included in the ‘Water Supply and Wastewater Services’ section.	“Require that all developments relating to water supply and wastewater treatment are subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment to ensure there are no likely significant effects on the	A new objective, WS 16, was included in the LAP as recommended in the AA.



Draft LAP Objective	AA Recommendation	Addressed in the LAP
	integrity, defined by the structure and function, of any European sites and that the requirements of Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive are met”.	
Recommend a new objective is included in the ‘Water Supply and Wastewater Services’ section.	“Promote the sustainable use of water and water conservation in existing and new developments within the town by encouraging demand management measures among all water users and requiring new developments to incorporate water conservation measures”.	A new objective, WS 14, was included in the LAP as recommended in the AA.
WS 12 (previously WS 11): Protect valuable groundwater sources and important surface water bodies from pollution through infiltration by domestic, agricultural or other sources of effluent/pollutant material.	This objective could be strengthened as follows: “Maintain, improve and enhance the environmental and ecological quality of surface waters and groundwater in Longford Town in conjunction with the EPA and in accordance with the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027 and future cycles of this Plan”.	Objective WS 12 was updated to incorporate the AA recommended mitigation.

**4.37** The following objectives in the Longford Town LAP also provide safeguards and mitigation measures from changes to hydrology that may have a significant effect on European sites, specifically:

- **WS 11** Protect valuable groundwater sources and important surface water bodies from pollution through infiltration by domestic, agricultural or other sources of effluent/pollutant material.
- **NHB 10** Support restoration and conservation works to protect and enhance water quality of the Camlin River and the (pNHA) Royal Canal and the associated biodiversity value of riverbanks.
- **WS 04** Seek to ensure the provision of an appropriate level of headroom in water services to facilitate the economic, social and environmental development of the town in the longer term. In this regard, the sewerage treatment plant in the town should be sized, as part of Uisce Eireann investment, to cater for potential large-scale industrial development in particular and in addition to anticipated population projections.
- **WS 05** Investigate the feasibility of establishing additional projects in terms of improving existing water supply, establishing new supplies, sewerage mains provision and improvement of existing treatment plants in the medium and long-term in conjunction with Uisce Eireann.
- **WS 13** Support the separation of foul and storm water network at the remaining locations within the town. Developments in locations where there are combined foul and surface water sewerage systems shall be required to provide separate systems.
- **WS 18** Discourage the over concentration/proliferation of individual septic tanks and treatment plants to minimise the risk of groundwater pollution.
- **WS 19** Ensure that all new development proposals include a Drainage Impact Assessment.
- **WS 20** Work alongside Uisce Éireann to minimise the number and frequency of storm overflows of sewage to watercourses.

**4.38** Additional safeguards and mitigation measures are provided within the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027, specifically:

- **CPO12.6** Ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European Sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource

requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects). Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive; in so far as there must be – (a) no alternative solution available, (b) imperative reasons of an overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and (c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

- **CPO12.7** Ensure that any plan or project that could have a significant adverse impact (either by themselves or in combination with other plans and projects) upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 Site or would result in the deterioration of any habitat or any species reliant on that habitat will not be permitted. Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive; in so far as there must be – (a) no alternative solution available (b) imperative reasons of an overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and (c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.
- **CPO5.83** Work in conjunction with Irish Water to protect existing water infrastructure, to maximise the potential of existing capacity and to facilitate the timely delivery of new water services infrastructure to facilitate future growth.
- **CPO5.84** Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Irish Water to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchment.
- **CPO5.88** Ensure that adequate water services are available to service development prior to the granting of planning permission and to require developers to consult Irish Water regarding available capacity, prior to applying for planning permission.
- **CPO5.89** Promote the sustainable use of water and water conservation in existing and new development within the County by encouraging demand management measures among all water users and requiring new developments to incorporate water conservation measures.
- **CPO5.92** Ensure that development will only be permitted in instances where there is sufficient capacity for appropriate collection, treatment and

disposal (in compliance with the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plan) of wastewater.

- **CPO5.94** Support strategic wastewater treatment infrastructure investment and provide for the separation of foul and surface water networks to accommodate future growth in the County.
- **CPO12.34** Preserve, protect and enhance the Counties inland lakes and waterways for their amenity and recreational resource amenity, including the Royal Canal, the Rivers Shannon, Inny and Camlin and Lough Ree, Lough Gowna as well as the County's other rivers and lakes.
- **CPO12.36** Protect Lough Ree from unsustainable, large-scale and high volume abstraction of water resources for use in areas external to County Longford.
- **CPO12.37** Ensure all abstractions of water from Lough Ree will be subject to assessment for compliance with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.
- **CPO12.67** Ensure that the County's watercourses are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection values.
- **CPO12.58** Conserve and enhance where possible, the wildlife habitats of the County's rivers and riparian zones, lakes, canals and streams which occur outside of designated areas to provide a network of habitats and biodiversity corridors throughout the county.
- **CPO12.59** Maintain a biodiversity zone of not less than 10 metres from the top of the bank of all watercourses in the county, with the full extent of the protection zone to be determined on a case by case basis by the Council, based on site specific characteristics and sensitivities.

## Conclusion

Providing the above mitigation measures are implemented successfully, Adverse Effects on the Integrity (AEol) of the Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog

SPA, Lough Ree SPA, Lough Ree SAC and Fortwilliam Turlough SAC, as a result of changes to hydrology will be avoided.

## In-combination effects

**4.39** Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires Screening for AA where “a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives”. Therefore, where likely insignificant effects are identified for the Longford Town LAP alone, it is necessary to consider whether these may become significant effects in combination with other plans or projects.

**4.40** The screening assessment has concluded that there are no impact pathways between the Longford Town LAP, which provides a strategic framework for future development rather than directly resulting in development, and therefore there is no mechanism by which a non-effect could interact to create an in-combination effect.

## Summary of Appropriate Assessment

**4.41 Table 4.1** summaries the conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment. The European sites that are shown as screened out with no colour indicate sites that were considered to have no Likely Significant Effect at the screening stage. The European sites highlighted as having no AEoI in grey were found to have no AEoI providing the mitigation measures detailed in this chapter are implemented.

**Table 4.4: Summary of the conclusion of the Appropriate Assessment**

European site	Physical damage / loss	Loss of functionally linked habitat	Non-physical disturbance	Air pollution	Recreational pressure	Changes in hydrology (water quality and quantity)
Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	No AEol	No AEol	No AEol
Glen Lough SPA	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out
Lough Ree SPA	Screened out	No AEol	No AEol (offsite only)	No AEol	No AEol	No AEol
Brown Bog SAC	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	No AEol	Screened out	Screened out
Mount Jessop Bog SAC	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out
Lough Forbes Complex SAC	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	No AEol	No AEol	Screened out
Clooneen Bog SAC	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	No AEol	Screened out	Screened out
Lough Ree SAC	Screened out	No AEol	No AEol (offsite only)	No AEol	No AEol	No AEol

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European site	Physical damage / loss	Loss of functionally linked habitat	Non-physical disturbance	Air pollution	Recreational pressure	Changes in hydrology (water quality and quantity)
Fortwilliam Turlough SAC	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	No AEol
Argagullion Bog SAC	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out	Screened out

## AA Conclusion Statement

**4.42** An initial screening of the Longford Town LAP, using the precautionary principle (without the application of mitigation measures) and the Source/Pathway/Receptor links between the Longford Town LAP and European sites with the potential to result in significant effects on the conservation objectives and features of interest of the European sites was carried out in **Chapter 3**. Based on best scientific knowledge and objective information and assessment, the possibility of significant effects caused by the Longford Town LAP was excluded for the following European sites:

- Argagullion Bog SAC;
- Mount Jessop Bog SAC; and
- Glen Lough SPA.

**4.43** The findings of the Screening for AA determined that the Longford Town LAP could result in the following Likely Significant Effects from the implementation of a number of the objectives within the LAP:

- **Loss of functionally linked land** - in relation to the Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC.
- **Non-physical disturbance (off-site only)** – in relation to the Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC.
- **Air pollution** – in relation to the Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA, Lough Ree SPA, Lough Forbes Complex SAC and Lough Ree SAC.
- **Recreation pressure** – in relation to the Lough Ree SAC, Lough Forbes Complex SAC, Lough Ree SPA and Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA.
- **Changes to hydrology including water quality and quantity** – in relation to the Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA, Lough Ree SPA, Lough Ree SAC and Fortwilliam Turlough SAC.



**4.44** The Appropriate Assessment stage identified whether the above Likely Significant Effects will, in light of mitigation and avoidance measures, result in Adverse Effects on Integrity (AEol) of the European sites either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. It can be concluded that no Adverse Effect on Integrity will occur on any European site subject to the provision of safeguarding and mitigation measures as detailed in **Chapter 4**.

**4.45** The following text summarises the safeguarding and mitigation measures recommended in the NIS which have all been included in the LAP:

- NHB 04 *“Require screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA), in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, to be carried out with respect to any plan or project which may have a likely significant impact on the River Camlin and Royal Canal pNHA”.*
- NHB 05 *“Require an ecological appraisal, in addition to an Appropriate Assessment, for development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of European Sites, or a proposed European Site and which are likely to have significant effects on that site either individually or cumulatively”.*
- NHB 09 *“Ensure the provision of appropriate Riparian strips of not less than 10 meters from the top of the bank of all watercourses to enhance biodiversity and preserve the natural flood regime of the area. The full extent of the biodiversity protection zone should be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Council, based on site specific characteristics and sensitivities”.*
- NHB 21 *“Ensure that any proposals for the lighting/flood lighting of waterways infrastructure, buildings or pedestrian/cycling routes along waterways minimise adverse impacts on protected species (e.g. bats, birds, otters, etc) and incorporate lighting schemes as set out in ‘Bats and Lighting, Guidance Notes for: Planners, engineers, architects, and developers’ (Bat Conservation Ireland, December 2010)”.*
- CC 17 *“Promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/5/0/EC) and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within*

*Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 201) (or any updated/superseding documents)”.*

- WS 12: *“Maintain, improve and enhance the environmental and ecological quality of surface waters and groundwater in Longford Town in conjunction with the EPA and in accordance with the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027 and future cycles of this Plan”.*
- WS 14: *“Promote the sustainable use of water and water conservation in existing and new developments within the town by encouraging demand management measures among all water users and requiring new developments to incorporate water conservation measures”.*
- WS 16: *“Require that all developments relating to water supply and wastewater treatment are subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment to ensure there are no likely significant effects on the integrity, defined by the structure and function, of any European sites and that the requirements of Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive are met”.*
- WS 17: *“Support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the relevant River Basin Management Plan and associated Programme of Measures, or any such plan that may supersede the same during the lifetime of this plan”.*

**4.46** Additional safeguarding and mitigation measures are detailed below:

- The successful implementation of the objectives, specifically the Natural Heritage and Biodiversity and Water Supply and Wastewater Services objectives, within the Longford Town LAP; and
- The successful implementation of objectives in the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.

**4.47** The mitigation provided above is considered to be sufficient to avoid significant adverse effects on the integrity of the European sites, however, as an additional mitigation measure, Longford County Council could consider requiring the preparation of a Recreational Mitigation Strategy for planning

applications that propose development along the waterways within Longford Town.

**4.48** In-combination effects from interactions with other plans or projects were considered in the assessment and the mitigation measures incorporated into the Longford Town LAP allow a conclusion to be arrived at that there will be no Likely Significant Effects as a result of the implementation of the Longford Town LAP, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

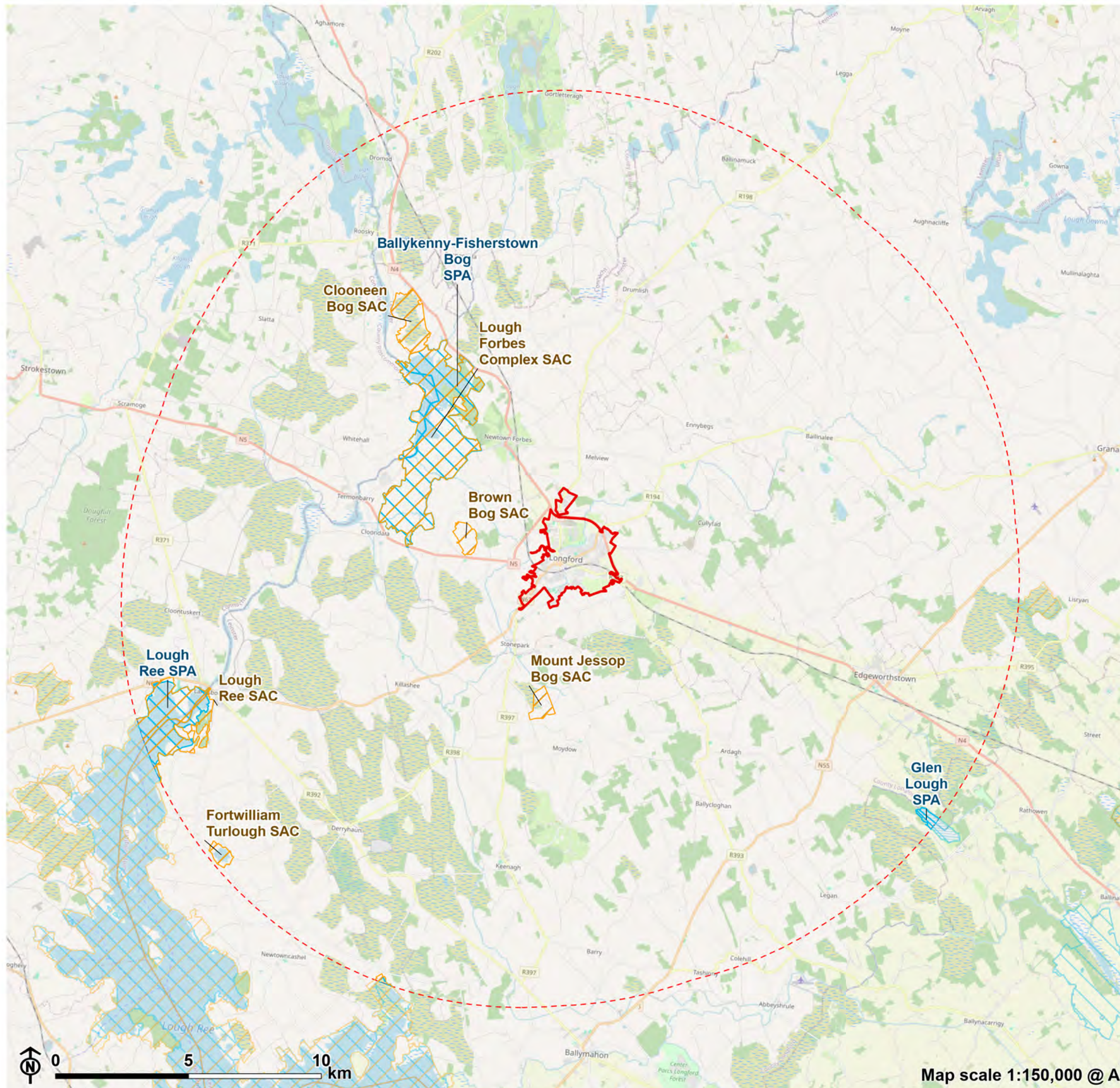
Following Stage 1: Screening and Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment, Longford County Council, as the competent authority, conclude that **the Longford Town LAP will not have an Adverse Effect on Integrity of any European site, subject to the provision of safeguarding and mitigation measures as detailed in this AA Screening and NIS.**

## **Appendix A**

### Map of European sites



Figure A.1: European Sites



- Longford Town LAP Study Area
- 15km buffer from the LAP Study Area
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Special Protection Area (SPA)

Map scale 1:150,000 @ A3



## Appendix B

### Case Law

## Interpretation of ‘Likely Significant Effects’

**B.1** European Court of Justice 7<sup>th</sup> September 2004 by Advocate General Kokott; Case C-127/02; Waddenzee versus Secretary of State for Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Fisheries – The CJEU ruled on the interpretation of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive:

- An effect should be considered ‘likely’, if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it will have a significant effect on a European site.
- An effect should be considered ‘significant’ if it undermines the conservation objectives of a European site.
- Where a plans or projects has an effect on a site but is not likely to undermine its conservation objectives, it cannot be considered likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

## Interpretation of Direct, Indirect and In-combination Effects

**B.2** European Court of Justice Opinion 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012 by Advocate General Sharpston; Case C 258/11; Peter Sweetman and Others versus An Bord Pleanála – The CJEU ruled that in determining whether a project or plan has an adverse effect on the integrity of a site (to which Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive applies), an effect which is permanent or long lasting must be regarded as an adverse effect.

**B.3** European Court of Justice 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018; Case C 461/17; Holohan and Others versus An Bord Pleanála – The CJEU ruled that:

- All the habitats and species for which a European site is protected must be catalogued.
- Assessment must identify and examine the implications of the proposed project for species present on the European site, including species for which the site has been listed and those for which it has not, provided those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site.
- Assessment must identify and examine the implications of the proposed project for species and habitats outside the boundaries of the European site, provided those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site.

**B.4** High Court Ruling 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 by Mr. Justice Denis McDonald; Neutral Citation [2020] IEHC 622; High Court Record No. 2020 238 JR; Highlands Residents Association and Protect East Meath Limited versus An Bord Pleanála, Ireland and The Minister For Culture Heritage and The Gaeltacht, Ireland and The Attorney General – The High Court ruled that An Bord Pleanála (the competent authority) erred in law in screening out (in the course of the Stage 1 screening exercise carried out by the competent authority) the possibility of significant effects on four European sites in relation to potential risk arising from the mobilisation of silt and pollutants from the development site in this particular Strategic Housing Development application, where the relevant application documentation (Environmental Impact Assessment Report, AA, CEMP) referenced protection of the River Boyne within the context that the proposed development site has a relatively close hydrological connection to the four relevant European sites.

## Application of the ‘Precautionary Principle’

**B.5** European Court of Justice Judgement 11<sup>th</sup> April 2013 by the Third Chamber; Case C 258/11; Peter Sweetman and Others versus An Bord Pleanála – The CJEU ruled that Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive must be interpreted as meaning that a project not directly linked to it is not immediately necessary for the management of a site to prejudice the integrity of that site if it is likely to prevent the preservation of the constituent characteristics of the site concerned in relation to the presence of a natural priority habitat whose purpose is to maintain gave the reason for registering that site in the list of sites of Community importance within the meaning of that directive. Therefore, the precautionary principle must be applied throughout.

## Application of Mitigation / ‘Best Practice Measures’

**B.6** European Court of Justice Judgement 12<sup>th</sup> April 2018 by the Seventh Chamber; Case C 323/17; People Over Wind and Sweetman versus Coillte Teoranta – The CJEU ruled that measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of a proposed project on a European site may no longer be taken into account by competent authorities at the Stage 1 screening stage when judging whether a proposed plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of a European designated site.

**B.7** European Court of Justice 19<sup>th</sup> April 2018; Case C 164/17; Grace and Sweetman versus An Bord Pleanála – The CJEU ruled there is a “distinction to be drawn between protective measures forming part of a project and intended [to] avoid or reduce any direct adverse effects that may be caused by the project in order to ensure that the project does not adversely affect the integrity of the area, which are covered by Article 6(3), and measures which, in accordance with Article 6(4), are aimed at compensating for the negative effects



of the project on a protected area and cannot be taken into account in the assessment of the implications of the project". The CJEU held that it is only when it is sufficiently certain that a measure will make an effective contribution to avoiding harm, guaranteeing beyond all reasonable doubt that the project will not adversely affect the integrity of the area, that such a measure may be taken into consideration when the appropriate assessment is carried out under Article 6(3). Article 6 of the Habitats Directive must be interpreted as meaning:

"Where it is intended to carry out a project on a site designated for the protection and conservation of certain species, of which the area suitable for providing for the needs of a protected species fluctuates over time, and the temporary or permanent effect of that project will be that some parts of the site will no longer be able to provide a suitable habitat for the species in question, the fact that the project includes measures to ensure that the part of the site that is likely to provide a suitable habitat will not be reduced and may actually be enhanced may not be taken into account for the purpose of the appropriate assessment under Article 6(3)."

**B.8** High Court Ruling 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2019 by Mr. Justice Barnville; Neutral Citation [2019] IEHC 84; High Court Record No. 2017 883 JR; Kelly versus An Bord Pleanála and Anor – The High Court ruled that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are not mitigation measures which a competent authority is precluded from considering at the Stage 1 Screening stage.

**B.9** High Court Ruling 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019 by Mr. Justice Simons; Neutral Citation [2019] IEHC 450; High Court Record No. 2019 20 JR; Heather Hill Management Company clg and anor versus An Bord Pleanála and Anor – The High Court ruled that a competent authority is not entitled to rely on 'best practice measures' for the purposes of a Stage 1 screening determination where the legal test is whether measures are intended to avoid and/or reduce a potential harmful effect on a European site.

**B.10** High Court Ruling 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 by Mr. Justice Denis McDonald; Neutral Citation [2020] IEHC 39; High Court Record No. 2019 33 JR; Peter Sweetman versus An Bord Pleanála, Ireland and The Attorney General – The High Court ruled that the competent authority was not entitled to take the measures described in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to protect the Blackwater River SAC into account in carrying out the Screening exercise in this particular solar farm development case.

## Appropriate Assessment

**B.11** High Court Ruling 25<sup>th</sup> July 2014 by Ms. Justice Finlay Geoghegan; Neutral Citation [2014] IEHC 400; High Court Record No. 2013 802 JR; Kelly versus An Bord Pleanála – The High Court ruled that for Assessment to be lawfully conducted it:

- Must identify, in the light of the best scientific knowledge in the field, all aspects of the plans or projects which can, by itself or in-combination with other plans or projects, affect a European site in the light of its conservation objectives. This requires both examination and analysis.
- Must contain complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions and may not have lacunae or gaps. The requirement for precise and definitive findings and conclusions appears to require analysis, evaluation and decisions. Further, the reference to findings and conclusions in a scientific context requires both findings following analysis and conclusions following an evaluation each in the light of the best scientific knowledge in the field.
- May only include a determination that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of any relevant European site where upon the basis of complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions made the Board decides that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of the identified potential effects.

**B.12** High Court Ruling 25<sup>th</sup> February 2016 by Mr. Justice Barton; Neutral Citation [2016] IEHC 134; High Court Record No. 2013 450 JR; Balz and Heubach versus An Bord Pleanála – The High Court ruled that an assessment

made under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive cannot be regarded as appropriate if it contains gaps and lacks complete, definitive and precise findings, and conclusions capable of removing all reasonable scientific doubt as to the effects of the plans or projects on a European site.

**B.13** Supreme Court Ruling 17<sup>th</sup> July 2018 by Mr Justice Clarke; Neutral Citation [2018]; Supreme Court Record No. 2014/488 JR; Connelly versus An Bord Pleanála – The Supreme Court ruled with the decision of the High Court that An Bord Pleanála (ABP) had breached its obligations regarding the recording of the Screening stage, the Assessment itself and the EIA in its decision to grant planning permission for the wind farm. The Assessment was found to be invalid due to the failure of ABP to make complete, precise and specific scientific findings which justified its conclusion. The Supreme Court found that the decision by ABP nor the materials referred to in ABP’s decision could be “shown to contain the sort of complete, precise and definitive findings which would underpin a conclusion that no reasonable scientific doubt remained as to the absence of any identified potential detrimental effects on a protected site having regard to its conservation objectives”.

**B.14** European Court of Justice 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018; Case C 461/17; Holohan and Others versus An Bord Pleanála – The CJEU ruled that:

- Where the competent authority rejects the findings in a scientific expert opinion recommending that additional information be obtained, Assessment must include an explicit and detailed statement of reasons capable of dispelling all reasonable scientific doubt concerning the effects of the work envisaged on the site concerned.

## Developer’s Responsibilities

**B.15** European Court of Justice 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018; Case C 461/17; Holohan and Others versus An Bord Pleanála – The CJEU ruled that:

- The competent authority may grant consent for a plans or projects that leaves the developer free to determine certain parameters relating to the

construction phase, such as the location of the construction compound and haul routes, if the competent authority is certain (i.e., no reasonable scientific doubt) that the development consent granted establishes conditions that are strict enough to guarantee that those parameters will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

- Article 5(1) and (3) of, and Annex IV to, Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, must be interpreted as meaning that the developer is obliged to supply information that expressly addresses the significant effects of its project on all species identified in the statement that is supplied pursuant to those provisions.
- Article 5(3)(d) of Directive 2011/92/EU must be interpreted as meaning that the developer must supply information in relation to the environmental impact of both the chosen option and of all the main alternatives studied by the developer, together with the reasons for his choice, taking into account at least the environmental effects, even if such an alternative was rejected at an early stage.

## Appendix C

### Screening Assessment

## Chapter 5 of the LAP - Core Strategy Compliance

### Core Strategy Objectives

- CS 01 Support the implementation of the relevant County Policy Objectives (CPO's) contained within Chapter 4: Core, Settlement and Housing Strategies and other relevant chapters of the County Longford Development Plan 2021-2027, including the Core Strategy and all zoning provisions of the County Longford Development Plan 2021-2027, or subsequent relevant Development Plan.
- CS 02 Upon the replacement of the current core strategy and zoning provisions of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 by a subsequent Development Plan, this Local Area Plan will recognise this and any associated land use zoning.
- CS 03 Support and facilitate compact growth through the sustainable intensification and consolidation of the town centre and established residential areas.
- CS 04 Monitor the scale, type, tenure and location of constructed and permitted developments in Longford during the lifetime of the Plan and apply appropriate development management standards to ensure compliance with the Core Strategy.
- CS 05 Encourage the compact growth of Longford Town and undertake a town centre first approach to ensure that development proceeds sustainably and at an appropriate scale, density and sequence and in line with the County Core Strategy Table.
- CS 06 Remain within the allocated housing requirements set out in the County Development Plan 2021-2027 Core Strategy for Longford Town (or subsequent relevant Development Plan) when facilitating residential

development. In this regard, development shall not be permitted where it conflicts with the County Core Strategy.

- CS 07 Encourage the appropriate redevelopment of brownfield and infill sites for residential and mixed uses within the existing built-up footprint of Longford Town.
- CS 08 Prioritise the development of sites zoned 'Town Centre' and 'New Residential' within the town (see Land Use Zoning Map – Appendix 1).
- CS 09 Support and facilitate the implementation of the regeneration of sites identified in this Plan (see Strategic Sites Map – Regeneration Chapter).
- CS 10 Focus new enterprise development into lands identified for Industry and Warehousing and Enterprise and Employment uses (see Land Use Zoning Map – Appendix 1).
- CS 11 Support new residential development and infill development that occurs in tandem with the delivery of supporting physical and social infrastructure.
- CS 12 Ensure that any development permitted is in accordance with the provisions of Volume 2: Appendix 1: Land Use Zoning Matrix and Volume 1: Section 16: Development Management Standards of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- CS 13 Preserve the lands identified as 'Strategic Reserve' on (see Land Use Zoning Map – Appendix 1), thereby controlling the level of piecemeal and haphazard development on these lands and safeguarding their strategic value in accommodating the orderly sequential expansion of the urban settlement beyond the current Plan period.
- CS 14 Ensure that projects giving rise to adverse effects on the integrity of European sites (cumulatively, directly, or indirectly) arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall not be permitted on the basis of this plan.

- CS 15 Ensure that any development within the Longford Town Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is carried out in accordance with best practice advice for development within the ACA (see Appendix 2).

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objectives CC 01, CC 03, CS 05, CS 07 - CC 10 encourage the compact growth of Longford Town; residential and employment development; and the redevelopment of brownfield / infill sites and regeneration sites. Therefore, these objectives are screened-in for further assessment as they would result in increased development and water-based discharges.
- All the remaining objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals.

## Chapter 6 of the LAP - Residential Sustainability and Placemaking

### Residential Density, Mix and Design Objectives

- RES 01 Ensure that all new residential development provides for a sustainable mix of housing types, sizes and tenures and that new development complements the existing residential mix.
- RES 02 Require residential developments be built at sustainable densities in appropriate locations, incorporating a mix of tenures and integrating the principles of healthy and age friendly placemaking.
- RES 03 Promote and support innovative housing models including live-work units and specific needs housing.



- RES 04 Require that an appropriate mix of housing type, tenure, density and size is provided in all new residential areas and in appropriate brownfield/infill areas to meet the needs of the population of Longford, including the provision of special needs housing which includes housing for older people, people with disabilities, social housing, affordable housing and accommodation for the travelling community.
- RES 05 Promote an age-friendly town, which seeks universal accessibility and age-friendly homes in accordance with the Age-Friendly Ireland - Ten Universal Design Features, 2021, and the best-practice guidance outlined in the Building for Everyone – A Universal Design Approach, by the Centre of Excellence in Universal Design.
- RES 06 Support the actions set out in Longford Age Friendly County Strategy 2019 – 2024 and any subsequent strategy, regarding the implementation of age friendly principles in the planning, design and delivery of physical infrastructure, public realm works, business and commercial premises.
- RES 07 Seek to provide Traveller Specific Accommodation at appropriate locations close to key services and public transport facilities in accordance with Longford County Council's Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 and any subsequent traveller accommodation programme.
- RES 08 Encourage the reuse of upper floors above commercial premises (existing retail / office units) in the Town Centre for residential accommodation.
- RES 09 Promote healthy place-making, increase the liveability factor of Longford, encourage the most efficient use of land, and ensure a mixture of residential unit types that are designed and constructed on the principles of universal design, life-long adaptability and energy efficiency.
- RES 10 Secure the provision of social infrastructure, community and recreational facilities in tandem with residential development.
- RES 11 Comply with the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities, published in January 2024, constitute Ministerial Guidelines and any other relevant Guidelines and Specific Planning Policy Requirements (SPPRs) issued

under Section 28(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

- RES 12 Require that residential schemes in close proximity to heavily trafficked roads within the Plan area are designed and constructed to minimise noise disturbance, follow a good acoustic design process and clearly demonstrate that significant adverse noise impacts will be avoided.
- RES 13 Apply a 10% social housing requirement, pursuant to Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) to all sites that are zoned solely for residential use or for a mixture of residential and other uses (save where the development is exempt from the provisions of Part V).
- RES 14 Apply requirements of Part 8 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) that a specified percentage of relevant public land which is being developed for residential use must be used for affordable housing (save where the development is exempt from the provisions of Part 8).
- RES 15 Apply the affordability requirement for residential developments on relevant public land with the right of first refusal of the LDA in relation to the disposal of relevant public land in accordance with Planning Circular Letter PGO 01/2023 and the Land Development Agency Act 2021 (Remaining Provisions) (Commencement) Order 2022.
- RES 16 Where appropriate, to support the change of use from vacant commercial units to residential use under the Derelict Sites Act 1990(as amended) or the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (as amended).
- RES 17 Have regard to the 'Residential Zoned Land Tax – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, June 2022' in identifying suitably zoned and serviced lands with the aim of bringing forward housing development.
- RES 18 Support the use of the Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund Scheme, which provides grants for the refurbishment of vacant properties for occupation as a principle private residence, including the conversion of a property, which has not been used as residential previously.

## Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objectives RES 01, RES 02 and RES 07 could result in increased development and are therefore screened-in for further assessment.
- All the remaining objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of residential proposals.

## Chapter 7 of the LAP - Economic Development

### Economic Development Objectives

- ECON 01 Support the implementation of the relevant County Policy Objectives (CPO's) contained within Chapter 8: Economic Development and other relevant chapters of the County Longford Development Plan 2021-2027.
- ECON 02 Support and promote Longford Town as a key hub for employment, enterprise and tourism within the Gateway Region, and in its role as an economic driver complementing the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone.
- ECON 03 Promote the Key Town of Longford Town as a primary centre of employment in the County and support the provision of increased employment through the expansion of the existing enterprise ecosystem in Longford and smart specialisation.
- ECON 04 Support the provision of physical infrastructure and zoned lands to realise the delivery of strategic employment lands in central accessible locations.

- ECON 05 Promote the plan led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks in Longford Town for employment, education, community, cultural and recreational opportunities.
- ECON 06 Support the development and expansion of enterprise and employment within Longford Town, and to co-operate with all stakeholders, landowners and relevant agencies to attract investment, while at the same time ensuring there is no resultant negative impact on the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre.
- ECON 07 Upon the replacement of the current core strategy and zoning provisions of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 by a subsequent Development Plan, this Local Area Plan will recognise this and any associated land use zoning.
- ECON 08 Support the economic development and regeneration of the town centre.
- ECON 09 Support the development of a creative and innovation hub and co-working space within the settlement.
- ECON 10 Support the development of a cross sectoral approach to promote Longford as a key tourism hub in the Midlands, building on Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand and the Shannon Tourism Masterplan.
- ECON 11 Develop the recreation and amenity potential of waterways including the River Shannon and Lough Ree and the development of a greenway network including the Galway to Dublin Cycleway, subject to the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport's Dublin to Galway Greenway Plan 2017, including measures relating to environmental management and sustainable development.
- ECON 12 Support and promote economic and enterprise development and activity in a manner which contributes to the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainably town.

## Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objectives ECON 02-ECON 06 and ECON 08 support the development of the town centre as a primary centre of employment through the development of zoned lands and publicly owned banks of land in Longford Town, which is likely to result in increased development. Objective ECON 11 aims to develop the recreation and amenity potential of waterways and the development of a greenway network, which may result in increased development and recreational pressure at European sites.
- All the remaining objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of employment development proposals.

## Retail Objectives

- RET 01 Support the implementation of the relevant County Policy Objectives (CPO's) contained within Chapter 8: Economic Development of the County Longford Development Plan 2021-2027.
- RET 02 Promote and encourage major enhancement of town centre activities within Longford town to enable it to maintain its strategic role as defined in the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.
- RET 03 Support, promote and facilitate measures, such as town centre regeneration, implementation of the Longford Town Local Transport Plan to improve accessibility and public realm improvements, and Town Centre First initiatives to reduce retail and commercial vacancy in the town centre.
- RET 04 Build upon the strong services function of Longford town and encourage an increase in high-end high street comparison retailing in the core shopping areas.
- RET 05 Support retail development which is of an appropriate size, scale and type to a town centre location in Longford Town's core shopping area.

- RET 06 Protect and promote the vitality and viability of Longford town centre, including applying a sequential test for retail developments, in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2012).
- RET 07 Improve the retailing environment of Longford Town by improving the public realm and facilitating a resolution to the centre traffic congestion problems.
- RET 08 Establish a dedicated Longford Town Team to look at actions to support the regeneration and promotion of the town as a whole and to work with the appointed Town Regeneration Officer and the Night-Time Economy Advisor who will feed into the Town Team and TCF Plan.
- RET 09 Promote and encourage appropriate evening and night-time economy uses to improve the vitality and vibrancy of Longford Town in accordance with the standards of the Purple Flag Programme, with the aim of achieving Purple Flag status for Longford Town.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objectives RET 02, RET 03 and RET 05 support the major enhancement of town centre activities by increasing retail development within Longford Town. This may result in development-based impacts and increased recreational pressure as a result of more people visiting the area.
- All the remaining objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of retail proposals and will not directly result in development.

## Chapter 8 of the LAP - Tourism

### Tourism Objectives

- TOU 01: Support the implementation of the relevant County Policy Objectives (CPO's) contained within Chapter 10: Tourism and other relevant chapters of the County Longford Development Plan 2021-2027.
- TOU 02: Continue to support the development and promotion of Longford 'Destination Town' as an urban tourism destination providing memorable and high-quality visitor experiences and services for visitors to the range of attractions and activities in the surrounding area.
- TOU 03: Support and promote Longford's as a 'Destination Town' by maximising the impact of branding and marketing through providing and sharing resources.
- TOU 04: Encourage the celebration of the unique attributes of Longford town in the design and delivery of all visitor interpretation, signage and public realm schemes in order to provide tourists with a strong 'Sense of Place' and a more memorable visit.
- TOU 05: Support the development and promotion of Longford town as the principal visitor services centre and hub for Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands in the County.
- TOU 06: Promote and develop its historical and cultural attractions and its recreation and amenity potential having regard to its natural amenities including the River Camlin, the Royal Canal and its links to the Longford Bogs and River Shannon.
- TOU 07: Facilitate the enhancement and development of Longford's Camlin Quarter, as a location where cultural heritage and artistic visitor attractions can be clustered, offering a unique and marketable tourism proposition.
- TOU 08: Promote the location of the Camlin River, Connolly Barracks and the unique Mall Park on the town trail as part of the various Longford tourism trails and the Royal Canal Greenway.

- TOU 09: Support community projects and industry-led collaborative tourism initiatives which aim to enhance and promote the visitor offering in Longford Town. These shall include trail heads for the Rebel Trail, Literary Trail and Mid Shannon Wilderness Park (see CDP Appendix 5: Tourism - Literary & Rebel Trail Map).
- TOU 10: Support the development of a strong evening and night-time tourism economy, in collaboration with arts and music venues, festivals and events committees, the Longford and local Chambers of Commerce, Town Team and the Night-Time Economy Advisor. This shall include support for various festivals.
- TOU 11: Develop public open spaces in Longford town that have good connectivity and are accessible for safe, secure walking and cycle routes, in particular links to the Royal Canal Greenway.
- TOU 12: Facilitate, where appropriate, proposals to improve access for all at existing tourism sites and facilities, and to require all new tourism related developments to ensure the development is accessible to everyone, regardless of their age, or ability.
- TOU 13: Support the provision of accessible tourism and to achieve this, all projects and improvements will adopt the principles of Universal Design.
- TOU 14: Undertake an Accessibility Audit within the lifetime of the Development plan to inform Accessible Tourism priority investments at key tourism hubs subject to the necessary resources.
- TOU 15: Facilitate, where appropriate, the provision of high-quality tourism products and services within the Town and in particular the provision of quality hotels and accommodation facilities, and the development of tourism activities, attractions and events and the development of linked tourist trails.
- TOU 16: Encourage clustering of tourism related developments in order to maximise benefit through the establishment of synergistic operational links, e.g. links between accommodation providers and outdoor activity pursuits.



- TOU 17: Encourage initiatives in the development of linked tourism and heritage trails that encourage longer stays in the Town.
- TOU 18: Promote and encourage initiatives in the establishment of a signage committee to develop an integrated signage theme for tourist attractions, which shall include strict specifications in terms of appearance, materials and location.
- TOU 19: Promote the development of walking and cycling routes within the town, particularly along the Canal and River Camlin.
- TOU 20: Maximise opportunities for the use of the Canal and Camlin River as tourism and recreational amenities by working with the appropriate bodies to develop the infrastructure and amenities.
- TOU 21: Support the development of the Longford Royal Canal Gateway Spur and continue to engage with Waterways Ireland in relation to the further development of the Royal Canal and the upgrading of its associated infrastructure.
- TOU 22: Support the enhanced connection between the Royal Canal Greenway and town centre, as proposed in the Royal Canal Gateway Spur proposal.
- TOU 23: Engage and consult with the relevant bodies, with regard to further potential opportunities for the Royal Canal Gateway Spur in Longford Town and other future development in the vicinity of the Canal including the promotion of active and passive tourism and the sensitive assessment of new development in the Canal corridor.
- TOU 24: Encourage and facilitate cultural and historical events within the Town.
- TOU 25: Promote and encourage initiatives in the support of eco-tourism such as initiatives in public transport and potential alternatives to the use of private cars to access visitor attractions.
- TOU 26: Promote and encourage initiatives in the development of best-practice guidelines on energy efficiency, waste management, and recycling in tourism facilities and enterprises.

## Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objectives TOU 02, TOU 05, TOU 06, TOU 07, TOU 15, TOU 19, and TOU 20 support the development and enhancement of tourism services and facilities in the town which could result in development-based impacts and increased recreational pressure on European sites as a result of more visitors to the area.
- All the remaining objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of tourism proposals and will not directly result in development.

## Chapter 9 of the LAP - Regeneration and Placemaking

### Longford Town Regeneration and Placemaking Objectives

- REG 01: Support the implementation of the relevant County Policy Objectives (CPO's) contained within Chapter 6: Regeneration, Chapter 7: Placemaking, and other relevant chapters of the County Longford Development Plan 2021-2027.
- REG 02: Support and prioritise Longford Town regeneration opportunities and the associated co-ordination of relevant stakeholders in recognition of its 'Key Town' status within the County.
- REG 03: Support Longford Town as a strategic portal to the northwest.
- REG 04: Support Longford Town in its role as a support centre to the regional growth centre of Athlone.

- REG 05: Support Longford town in its role as a strategic employment centre.
- REG 06: Support the development of Longford Town as a tourism hub.
- REG 07: Support social inclusion measures including the revitalisation of areas by physical regeneration, planning, investment and community development.
- REG 08: Support the plan-led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks in the town for residential, employment, education, community, cultural and recreational opportunities.
- REG 09: Support the consolidation of the town centre and the enhancement and linking of brownfield and outlying sites to the town centre, with a focus on the regeneration of underused buildings and strategic sites.
- REG 10: Enhance accessibility and sustainable mobility within the town centre by improving links between the core and surrounding areas through the further integration of public transport, walking and cycling facilities.
- REG 11: Connect educational, recreational, employment, civic and town centre economic activity, and in particular improve the relationship between the Albert Reynolds Peace Park (the Mall) and the town core.
- REG 12: Support tourism investment and the profile of the Camlin River in Longford Town through the strategic development of recreational trails and networks.
- REG 13: Create north-south linkages from the Canal to the Camlin River incorporating the Royal Canal Greenway and Albert Reynolds Peace Park (the Mall), linking areas of tourism and amenity potential such as Connolly Barracks, St. Mel's Cathedral, the Backstage Theatre in relation to the town core.
- REG 14: Promote the development of the Camlin Quarter area of Longford Town in accordance with the Camlin Quarter Plan, or other relevant subsequent plan / strategy.
- REG 15: Develop the Camlin Quarter (including Connolly Barracks, Church St. Great Water Street, Little Water Street onto the Albert

Reynolds Peace Park (the Mall), by enhancing the public realm, investigation of potential land uses, landbank assembly and connectivity improvements.

- REG 16: Work with elected members and support community capacity building through Town Teams and the URBACT Local Group, in delivering improved regeneration.
- REG 17: Recognise the importance of universal accessibility and promote relevant Initiatives in conjunction with representative organisations which will include various interventions in the Albert Reynolds Peace Park (the Mall), the acquisition of ORIS investment or other relevant funding stream for works to the Camlin Bridge, and any further projects or delivery of universal accessibility under new initiatives addressing specific target areas.
- REG 18: Support the development of projects identified in the Military Assets as Public Spaces Integrated Action Plan and any other relevant plan or strategy for Longford Town.
- REG 19: Pursue complementary funding streams that support broader aims to achieve outcomes in the areas of tourism, economic, recreation, heritage, amenity, social inclusion and climate action.
- REG 20: Seek the preparation and implementation of regeneration plans (including for the public realm) in Longford's Town Centre, through appropriate funding sources.
- REG 21: Develop and implement a Town Centre First Strategy which makes Longford town a better place to live, work and visit.
- REG 22: Encourage the repair and enhancement of existing shopfronts and the replacement of inappropriate shop fronts where necessary in accordance with Annex 8: Shopfront Design Guidelines of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.

## Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objectives REG 02-REG 06, REG 08, REG 12, REG 13, REG 14 and REG 15 could result in employment, tourism and town centre development with Longford Town, in particular the development of the Camlin Quarter area near the Camlin River which links to several European sites.
- The remaining objectives support the regeneration of Longford Town through compliances with plans and strategies and sourcing funding streams and are therefore not expected to have a significant effect either alone or in-combination with other plans.

## Master Planning – Strategic Sites Objectives

- MP 01: Promote the appropriate development and regeneration of the designated 'regeneration areas' identified in this Plan and to include 'Vacant Sites' and 'Derelict Sites' in accordance with the requirements of the Vacant Sites Officer and the Regeneration section.
- MP 02: Promote the development and regeneration of the 'Strategic Sites' identified in the Longford Local Area Plan, to include on a Master Plan basis.
- MP 03: Identify additional 'Regeneration Areas' as required, to include areas suffering from social and economic deprivation within Longford town.
- MP 04: Promote innovative solutions to ensure social, economic and environmental gain for communities.
- MP 05: Masterplans shall be prepared for the identified 'Strategic Sites' in consultation with the community and also with relevant statutory bodies during the lifetime of this Plan. Additional areas suffering from social and economic deprivation will also be prioritised.
- MP 06: Carry out master planning to ensure that large areas of land are appropriately planned and developed in a sustainable manner, which

include provision for phasing, infrastructure provision, community facilities, density, layout, open spaces, landscaping and development design briefs and statements.

- MP 07: Finalise and agree a masterplan for the appropriate regeneration and renaturing of the floodplain areas of the Ballyminion area of Longford Town.
- MP 08: Prepare masterplans for additional areas as required, such as the Ardnacassa and St Michael's Road areas of Longford Town and other areas suffering from social and economic deprivation within Longford town.
- MP 09: Encourage private development in accordance with a detailed and agreed masterplan that fully addresses the potential of the site in its wider context.
- MP 10: Seek funding from a variety of local, national and EU sources as part of the dedicated town regeneration initiative.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objectives MP 01, MP 02 and MP 03 support the development of regeneration and strategic sites which may result in development-based impacts.
- The remaining objectives support the creation of masterplans and encourage development to be undertaken in line with masterplans and are therefore not expected to have a significant effect either alone or in combination with other plans.

## Public Realm, Universal Design and Age Friendly Objectives

- PUA 01: Ensure the policy objectives contained in Chapter 7: Placemaking of the *Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027* and other relevant chapters are taken into account.
- PUA 02: Support and encourage the principle of healthy place-making in Longford Town.
- PUA 03: Support the development of public realm projects in Longford that enhance the aesthetics of the town's built and natural character and improve the overall ambience and visitor experience of the town
- PUA 04: Review existing studies relating to the quality of life in the town and its environs and update these where relevant for incorporation into policy as appropriate.
- PUA 05: Ensure public realm improvements are carried out in accordance with adherence to the Development Plan Signage Design Guidelines.
- PUA 06: Prepare a detailed public realm strategy to identify and address improvements required to the public realm, taking the principles of universal design into account.
- PUA 07: Work with various stakeholders to identify how new and existing infrastructure / buildings can be made age friendly by implementing the new policies and guiding documents from *Age Friendly Ireland*.
- PUA 08: Ensure the policies, objectives and actions of the forthcoming *County Longford Age Friendly Strategy 2023-2028* and any other relevant policy document are taken into account.

## Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- All Public Realm objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of public realm proposals.

## Chapter 10 of the LAP - Social Infrastructure

### Education, Childcare and Health Facilities Objectives

- ECH 01 Require the provision of appropriately located and purpose-built early learning and childcare facilities to meet the pro-rata childcare needs of housing development during the plan period.
- ECH 02 Ensure future residential developments must justify how childcare provision has been met (i.e. existing capacity) in instances where childcare facilities are omitted from a proposed scheme. With respect to childcare, the lead agent for delivery is the developer.
- ECH 03 Support and facilitate improvements to existing primary schools and secondary schools to resolve current capacity issues and facilitate forecasted future growth.
- ECH 04 Support the provision of adequate and suitable school accommodation, as needs require, including the development of new schools and the expansion or alteration of existing ones (within the 'built up' areas within Longford).
- ECH 05 Promote initiatives with relevant agencies to expand training and education that meets the wide range of business skills located in Longford town.



- ECH 06 Support existing educational facilities and support development of further education facilities to address any lack of higher educational attainment, including the need for third level education such as outreach / specialist courses.
- ECH 07 Support and co-operate with promoters or operators of public and private health care facilities by facilitating and encouraging the provision of improved health care facilities in appropriate locations in Longford town.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objectives ECH 01, ECH 04 and ECH 06 support the creation of education, childcare and health facilities which may result in development-based impacts.
- The remaining objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of educational, community or healthcare proposals.

### Social Infrastructure Objectives

- CSR 01 Facilitate and support a broad range of community, cultural and recreational facilities to serve the additional needs of the residents of Longford town as the need arises.
- CSR 02 Support the development of additional community and social infrastructure at Saint Michael's Road and other disadvantaged areas in the town.
- CSR 03 Support and facilitate the provision of both indoor and outdoor multi-functional community facilities to meet the needs of the population of Longford town.
- CSR 04 Support and facilitate the development of a Family Resource Centre at an appropriate location.

- CSR 05 Support, promote and facilitate the development of cultural, arts and performance spaces in Longford Town.
- CSR 06 Support any appropriate development or extension of places of worship/burial in Longford Town.
- CSR 07 Provide for a hierarchy of high quality multi-functional public open spaces within Longford town, and to preserve and protect such spaces through the appropriate zoning of lands.
- CSR 08 Support the development and implementation of an Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Strategy for Longford Town relating to the provision of open space and outdoor recreation infrastructure in Longford town.
- CSR 09 Promote and provide amenities and features such as playgrounds, outdoor gym equipment facilities and picnic tables in all open spaces to improve their quality and usability.
- CSR 10 Cooperate with key stakeholders including landowners in the development (where appropriate) of universally accessible greenways and blueways, and other areas within Longford town for recreational purposes, subject to appropriate environmental considerations.
- CSR 11 Explore the feasibility of and develop and/or improve linkages and connections between the network of open spaces in Longford town, without compromising the biodiversity along the banks of the River Camlin and banks of the Royal Canal.
- CSR 12 Expand the footprint and improve existing connections to the existing Albert Reynolds Peace Park (The Mall) Longford Town, while supporting the development of all other parks within the Local Area Plan functional area.
- CSR 13 Support and facilitate the provision of additional children's play facilities in Longford Town within existing and proposed green spaces as the need arises, for children of all ages while also having regard to those with special needs.

- CSR 14 Require, promote and facilitate the development of a new local park to cater for the needs of the autistic community at the site of the former Greyhound Track.
- CSR 15 Support and promote the development of a sports training hub on Longford County Council owned lands at the former Greyhound Track to cater for active recreation purposes.
- CSR 16 Require, promote and facilitate the development of a new local dog park (preferably 2 ha or larger in area) in an appropriate location.
- CSR 17 Support and facilitate the development of a new local eco-park in an appropriate location (2 ha or larger in area), which would provide active and passive recreation subject to appropriate environmental considerations.
- CSR 18 Facilitate and promote community-managed gardens/allotments and green waste composting sites.
- CSR 19 Seek to provide open space and recreation facilities in the Plan area by:
  - Creating a network of open spaces, and creating connectivity between these to form a nature wildlife corridor;
  - Securing the creation of recreational facilities in association with the development of nearby residential, industrial or commercial development.

### **Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?**

- Objectives CSR 01, CSR 08 and CSR 11 support the development of social and community infrastructure; the development and implementation of an Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Strategy; and improved connections between open spaces including to the River Camlin and Royal Canal. These objectives may result in development-based impacts or may result in increased access and recreational pressure on European sites.

- The remaining objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of social infrastructure proposals.

## **Chapter 11 of the LAP - Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure**

### **Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Objectives**

- NHB 01 Comply with the Natural Heritage Objectives contained in Chapter 12: Natural Heritage & Environment of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- NHB 02 Implement where relevant the County Longford Heritage Plan and Longford Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2024.
- NHB 03 Protect, conserve and enhance Longford's biodiversity and natural heritage that includes wildlife (flora and fauna), habitats and landscapes of importance to wildlife, particularly along the Royal Canal pNHA and Camlin River.
- NHB 04 Require screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA), in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, to be carried out with respect to any plan or project which may have a likely significant impact on the River Camlin and Royal Canal pNHA.
- NHB 05 Require an ecological appraisal, in addition to an Appropriate Assessment, for development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of European Sites, or a proposed European Site and which are likely to have significant effects on that site either individually or cumulatively.
- NHB 06 Prohibit any development that would be harmful to or that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats and/or disturbance of protected species within Longford town. Appropriate species surveys (e.g., bat surveys, bird surveys etc.) will be required for proposals to

redevelop and reuse existing buildings, recognising that these structures can provide niche habitats and places of shelter for protected species.

- NHB 07 Support statutory authorities in measures to manage proposed or designated sites in order to achieve their conservation objectives.
- NHB 08 Seek to enhance the Town's biodiversity, natural heritage and landscape, by promoting appropriate recreational and amenity schemes and encouraging the establishment of wildlife areas and corridors in the context of educational, recreational and amenity facilities.
- NHB 09 Ensure the provision of appropriate Riparian strips of not less than 10 meters from the top of the bank of all watercourses to enhance biodiversity and preserve the natural flood regime of the area. The full extent of the biodiversity protection zone should be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Council, based on site specific characteristics and sensitivities.
- NHB 10 Support restoration and conservation works to protect and enhance water quality of the Camlin River and the (pNHA) Royal Canal and the associated biodiversity value of riverbanks.
- NHB 11 Support the role that biodiversity and green infrastructure plays in the Plan Area in relation to ecosystem services along with climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- NHB 12 Promote the protection and preservation of existing natural vegetation features and hedgerows and encourage the planting of native hedgerow and tree species. Existing feature vegetation (e.g. groups of trees, shrubs, hedgerows etc) should be integrated into any new development wherever possible. Where the loss of the existing features is unavoidable, new biodiversity features should incorporate native species, and species of local provenance to replace existing hedgerows and trees.
- NHB 13 Promote appropriate tree planting and pollinator friendly planting, in accordance with the recommendations of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan throughout Longford Town and in open spaces within new developments in order to enhance local biodiversity, visual amenity and surface water management.

- NHB 14 Require that developments shall have regard to biodiversity within their landscaping and planting schemes, utilising site-appropriate native plants and, where feasible, facilitating wildlife corridors and access to the natural heritage of the Town.
- NHB 15 Protect and enhance the biodiversity value of the public realm, through the adoption of appropriate planting schemes and landscaping and trimming methods.
- NHB 16 Require mitigating measures in certain cases where it is evident that biodiversity is likely to be affected. These measures may, in association with other specified requirements, include establishment of wildlife areas/corridors/parks, tree planting, wildflower meadows/marshes and other areas.
- NHB 17 Support a presumption against tree felling, topping, lopping or wilful destruction of mature trees as part of development proposals. Where a development proposal involves the felling, topping, lopping or threatens the destruction of a mature tree or trees, a tree survey will need to be included in the submission, carried out by a qualified Tree Specialist to justify the exceptional circumstances for their actions. The applicant must demonstrate the justification and rationale for removal of mature trees in terms of effect on ecology and landscape and demonstrate how replacement planting will compensate for loss of trees and woodland features. An assessment of potential tree roost features by a qualified and experienced ecologist may also be requested as part of such proposals.
- NHB 18 Carry out a tree survey of the town to identify further trees suitable for Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and seek to protect trees with a particular local amenity or conservation value.
- NHB 19 Protect views and important view corridors, as identified within this Local Area Plan and the Longford County Development Plan 2021 – 2027.
- NHB 20 Protect from inappropriate development, St. Mel's Cathedral, a county geological site, which is identified by the Irish Geological Heritage Programme for Protection.

- NHB 21 Ensure that any proposals for the lighting/flood lighting of waterways infrastructure, buildings or pedestrian/cycling routes along waterways within the Plan area minimise adverse impacts on protected species (e.g. bats, birds, otters, etc) and incorporate lighting schemes as set out in 'Bats and Lighting, Guidance Notes for: Planners, engineers, architects, and developers' (Bat Conservation Ireland, December 2010).
- NHB 22 Survey existing bridge structures in Longford town to identify whether any such structure currently supports bat roosts.
- NHB 23 Investigate opportunities for placement of bat boxes and/or bird nesting boxes along the River Camlin and Royal Canal in conjunction with relevant bodies and in partnership with the National Parks & Wildlife Service and Waterways Ireland.
- NHB 24 In consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, pursue the preparation, establishment and implementation of Habitat Mapping and a Wetland Survey for the Town.
- NHB 25 Ensure that where the presence of invasive species is identified at the site of any proposed development or where the proposed activity has an elevated risk of resulting in the presence of these species, details of how these species will be appropriately managed and controlled will be required.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- The objectives aim to protect and conserve local biodiversity, wildlife and the natural environment. A number of the objectives support restoration works to the terrestrial and water environment; aim to enhance the local biodiversity; and, support tree planting.

### Green Infrastructure Objectives

- GI 01 Protect, enhance and further develop the Green Infrastructure network in Longford town to provide a shared space for amenity,

recreation and biodiversity to thrive and to strengthen links to the wider regional network. This should be informed by appropriate ecological surveys and assessment.

- GI 02 Reduce fragmentation of the existing green infrastructure network while protecting and enhancing its biodiversity by strengthening ecological links including stepping-stone habitats (according to their value).
- GI 03 Integrate new and existing green infrastructure as an essential component of all new developments and to restrict development that would fragment, damage or prejudice the integrity of the green infrastructure network. Site specific ecology surveys should be carried out to inform proposed developments.
- GI 04 Seek to provide open space and recreation facilities in the Plan area by creating a network of open spaces and creating connectivity between these to form a nature wildlife corridor.
- GI 05 Ensure the key green infrastructure and habitat features identified in Potential Green Infrastructure Projects Map, and the linkages they provide to larger areas of green infrastructure and the wider countryside are retained and integrated into the design of new developments as far as practicable.
- GI 06 Protect, enhance, create and connect natural heritage, high-quality amenity areas and other green spaces throughout Longford Town for both biodiversity and recreational use. Promote links with any further designated walking, cycling and wildlife routes existing or proposed throughout the County.
- GI 07 Preserve, protect and enhance the Royal Canal and Camlin River as important amenity and recreational resources. Walkway development will be promoted, particularly in the vicinity of the Canal and the Camlin River. Require retention or creation of public access to the waterways in order to facilitate the creation or expansion of walking/cycling routes.
- GI 08 Protect, enhance and improve existing public rights of way where appropriate and investigate the provision of additional rights of way, parking and lay-be facilities where appropriate through agreement with existing landowners and through the development management process.



- GI 09 Seek that development proposals also include an outline of measures to protect the retained green infrastructure of a site during the period of construction.
- GI 10 Provide for wildlife bridges (eco links) as part of any new pedestrian and cycle links across the River Camlin, the Royal Canal and railway, thereby facilitating the free movement of people and species throughout the Plan area.
- GI 11 Promote a network of pedestrian and cycle paths to enhance accessibility to the green infrastructure network, while ensuring that the design and operation of the routes responds to ecological protection needs.
- GI 12 Incorporate items of historical or heritage importance within the Green Infrastructure network as amenity features, where practical.

### **Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?**

- Objectives GI 01, GI 07, GI 08 and GI 11 support the creation of new green infrastructure and active travel routes, particularly along the Royal Canal and Camlin River which may result in increased access to and recreational pressure on European sites.
- The remaining objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of green infrastructure proposals.

## Chapter 12 of the LAP - Built and Cultural Heritage

### Protected Structures Objectives

- PS 01 Comply with the Record of Protected Structures Policies as contained in Chapter 11: Built and Cultural Heritage of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- PS 02 Ensure the protection and preservation of all protected structures (or parts of structures), including the curtilage and attendant grounds of structures contained in the Record of Protected Structures (see Map XX and Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027, Volume 2: Appendix 6: Built and Cultural Heritage).
- PS 03 Acknowledge and promote awareness of the origins, historical development and cultural heritage of the town, to support high-quality developments that relate to local heritage and to ensure that new development respects and is responsive to the cultural heritage of Longford town.
- PS 04 Support the sensitive conservation of protected structures, their curtilage and attendant grounds, and to operate flexibility with regard to the use of these buildings to facilitate their ongoing use, subject to good conservation principles.
- PS 05 Proactively address dereliction, endangerment, neglect and vacancy in the town centre through the use of the Council's legal process and through the promotion of appropriate uses and the sensitive conservation of historic buildings, in conjunction with other relevant initiatives.
- PS 06 Encourage the protection, retention, appreciation and appropriate revitalisation of the vernacular and industrial heritage of Longford town.

- PS 07 Protect and conserve important heritage items such as, gates, street furniture, post boxes and other significant historic features of interest.
- PS 08 Support the development of a Longford Town Heritage Centre and Museum as an important tourism and heritage resource for the town.
- PS 09 Support the public access to Connolly Barracks as a tourist and heritage destination and to support the preparation of a conservation management plan for the building to avoid loss of historic building fabric and authenticity through appropriate repair and restoration work.
- PS 10 Work with and assist, where appropriate, owners of protected structures within Longford Town in their maintenance and repair of such structures through advice and grant aid from relevant sources.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- The Protected Structures objectives support the protection and conservation of the historic environment and heritage assets. The objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of heritage proposals.

## Architectural Conservation Area Objectives

- AC 01 Comply with the Architectural Conservation County Policy Objectives as contained in Chapter 11: Built and Cultural Heritage of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- AC 02 Protect the character of the Battery Road Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) and carefully consider any proposals for development that would affect the special value of the ACA in accordance with the Battery Road ACA Statement of Character, DoEHG's 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2004)' and their 'Advice Series'.

- AC 03 Encourage the retention, repair and re-use of materials which characterise the vernacular architecture of the ACA including stone, slate, timber windows and doors, and decorative render.
- AC 04 Ensure that any development (contemporary or traditional) within or adjoining the ACA is of high-quality design and finish and is sympathetic to the character of the area. All applications within and adjoining the ACA will be assessed in the context of the following criteria and the impact of any development on the immediate surroundings of the site, the broader townscape or its landscape setting;
  - The height, scale and orientation of the proposed development;
  - The bulk, massing and density of the proposed development and its layout in relation to any building line and the surrounding plan form;
  - The quality and type of materials to be used in the construction of the development; any boundary treatment and landscaping;
  - The design and detail of the proposed development;
  - The retention of the traditional plot boundaries of the town;
  - The retention and maintenance of historic street furniture, surfaces and boundary treatments.
- AC 05 Review all applications for demolition, modifications or extensions to existing buildings with regard to their relative importance to the appreciation of the character of the ACA as identified in the Statement of Character.
- AC 06 Strongly discourage proposals for the demolition of a structure that positively contributes to the character of the ACA, except in exceptional circumstances. Longford County Council will require such applications to be accompanied by a photographic survey, condition report and architectural heritage assessment of the structure and an assessment of the impact of the replacement building on the character of the ACA.
- AC 07 Require that proposals for infill development within the ACA, and proposals contiguous to the ACA should include an analysis of how the new development complements the setting, character and appearance of

the ACA, making reference to the findings of the Statement of Character for the town.

- AC 08 Encourage removal of visually intrusive elements from existing façades, and reinstatement of historic features, and differentiation of original building plots in accordance with the advice and case study demonstrated in the Statement of Character for the town.
- AC 09 Encourage appropriate new infill development which is considered essential to the vibrancy and sustainability of the town, designed in accordance with the advice given in the Statement of Character.
- AC 10 Reduce, prevent and encourage the removal of visual and urban clutter within the ACA.
- AC 11 Protect the landscape character, values, sensitivities, focal points and views identified in the Battery Road ACA Statement of Character. This will include the following:
  - The requirement of a Visual Impact Assessment for developments with potential to impact on areas of significant landscape character, value or sensitivity, including both urban and natural features, significant townscapes and historic buildings, as appropriate.
  - Prohibit development that will block or interfere with a significant focal point or a view. Where it is considered that a development may impact on focal points or views, proposals must have regard to the significance of any such impact and any appropriate mitigation measures that should be incorporated.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- The Architectural Conservation Area objectives support the protection and conservation of the historic environment and heritage assets in the Battery Road ACA. The objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of heritage proposals in the ACA.

## Archaeological Heritage Objectives

- AH 01 Comply with the relevant policies as contained in Chapter 11: Built and Cultural Heritage of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- AH 02 Safeguard the archaeological heritage located within the boundary of the Local Area Plan and avoid negative impacts on sites, monuments, features or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest.
- AH 03 Prioritise the protection/preservation in situ items of archaeological interest from inappropriate development that would adversely affect and/or detract from the interpretation and setting of these sites.
- AH 04 Encourage, where practicable, the provision of public access to sites identified on the Sites and Monuments Record under the direct ownership or control of the Local Authority and the State.
- AH 05 Provide for the protection of historic burial grounds within Longford, in co-operation with agencies such as the Office of Public Works and the National Monuments Section of the Department of the Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- AH 06 Ensure that development proposals contribute towards the protection and preservation of the archaeological value of underwater or archaeological sites associated with the River Camlin, the Royal Canal and associated features.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- The objectives seek to protect archaeological heritage assets. The objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals that may impact archaeological heritage assets.

## Chapter 13 of the LAP - Infrastructure

### Energy, Communications and Waste Objectives

- EC 01 Continue to work with infrastructure providers to secure adequate water services, effective public transport, energy, telecommunications, waste management facilities to support development.
- EC 02 Promote and facilitate the development and renewal of energy and communications networks, including broadband services in Longford town, while protecting the amenities of the town, including landscape, residential amenity, visual and environmental considerations.
- EC 03 Seek the undergrounding of all electricity, telephone and television cables within the town wherever possible, while taking into consideration landscape, residential amenity, and environmental considerations.
- EC 04 Adequately maintain existing recycling and bring bank facilities and assess their locations, and secure the provision of additional facilities that will not adversely affect residential amenity or environmental quality at appropriate locations, as required.
- EC 05 Seek the provision of hazardous waste collection at the Athlone Road Civic Amenity site, subject to appropriate environmental and amenity safeguards.
- EC 06 Promote and encourage the use of renewable energy technologies in existing and proposed building stock subject to consideration of environmental, conservation and visual requirements.
- EC 07 Protect environmental quality in Longford through the implementation of European, national and regional policy and legislation relating to air quality, greenhouse gases, climate change, light pollution, noise pollution and waste management.
- EC 08 Require all commercial and residential developments to be provided with adequate internal and external space for the correct storage of waste and recyclable materials. This is particularly important in relation to shared bin spaces such as apartment developments.

- EC 09 Support local schools, town and community groups such as Longford Green Towns Initiative and Longford Tidy Towns through education and awareness programmes and where available, through the provision of grant aid.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objective EC 01, EC 02, EC 03 and EC 06 could result in the development of energy and communication networks. Objective EC 05 could result in the development of hazardous waste collection. Therefore, these objectives are screened-in for further assessment as they could result in development-based impacts, water-based discharges, and pollution.
- The remaining objective is not likely to have a significant effect alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

## Water Supply and Wastewater Services Objectives

- WS 01 Support the implementation of the relevant County Policy Objectives (CPO's) contained within Chapter 5: Transport, Infrastructure, Energy & Communications, and other relevant chapters of the County Longford Development Plan 2021-2027.
- WS 02 Promote the establishment of schemes in designated areas in tandem with proposed developers, Uisce Eireann and other utility and services providers to secure infrastructural services to designated sites for the promotion of appropriate development.
- WS 03 Seek to ensure the provision of appropriate and adequate drinking water as part of Uisce Eireann investment and management programmes.
- WS 04 Seek to ensure the provision of an appropriate level of headroom in water services to facilitate the economic, social and environmental development of the town in the longer term. In this regard, the sewerage



treatment plant in the town should be sized, as part of Uisce Eireann investment, to cater for potential large-scale industrial development in particular and in addition to anticipated population projections.

- WS 05 Investigate the feasibility of establishing additional projects in terms of improving existing water supply, establishing new supplies, sewerage mains provision and improvement of existing treatment plants in the medium and long-term in conjunction with Uisce Eireann.
- WS 06 Carry out the extension of existing water supply and wastewater services where required and where resources permit. Where such extensions are required as a result of a new development, the developers shall be required to pay a contribution towards the cost of this extension or carry the works out.
- WS 07 Designate and map wayleaves for the installation and maintenance of water services infrastructure. These wayleaves, once identified shall be protected from inappropriate development.
- WS 08 Restrict or prohibit the large-scale development of un-serviced land where serviced land, of an appropriate size and nature to meet the needs of the proposed development, exists in the vicinity.
- WS 09 Ensure that public water supply shall comply with EU standards and shall be upgraded where necessary to comply with same and to ensure that the public drinking water supply of the Town complies with relevant EU drinking water standards and to extend supply, where necessary and where resources permit, to meet demand.
- WS 10 Protect existing sources of municipal water supplies through restricting potentially pollutant development within a specified distance from the proposed source. Where additional potential municipal water supplies are identified, it shall be the policy of the Council to restrict potentially pollutant development within a specified distance with the proposed source.
- WS 11 Protect valuable groundwater sources and important surface water bodies from pollution through infiltration by domestic, agricultural or other sources of effluent/pollutant material.

- WS 12 Maintain, improve and enhance the environmental and ecological quality of surface waters and groundwater in Longford Town in conjunction with the EPA and in accordance with the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027 and future cycles of this Plan.
- WS 13 Support the separation of foul and storm water network at the remaining locations within the town. Developments in locations where there are combined foul and surface water sewerage systems shall be required to provide separate systems.
- WS 14 Promote the sustainable use of water and water conservation in existing and new developments within the town by encouraging demand management measures among all water users and requiring new developments to incorporate water conservation measures.
- WS 15 Educate the public in water conservation measures, through public awareness campaigns.
- WS 16 Require that all developments relating to water supply and wastewater treatment are subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment to ensure there are no likely significant effects on the integrity, defined by the structure and function, of any European sites and that the requirements of Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive are met.
- WS 17 Support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the relevant River Basin Management Plan and associated Programme of Measures, or any such plan that may supersede the same during the lifetime of this plan.
- WS 18 Discourage the over concentration/proliferation of individual septic tanks and treatment plants to minimise the risk of groundwater pollution.
- WS 19 Ensure that all new development proposals include a Drainage Impact Assessment.
- WS 20 Work alongside Uisce Éireann to minimise the number and frequency of storm overflows of sewage to watercourses.

## Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objectives WS 02 - WS 06 and WS 13 supports the provision of appropriate and adequate drinking water; the extension of existing water supply and wastewater services; and the separation of foul and storm water network. Therefore, these objectives are screened-in for further assessment as they could result in development-based impacts, water-based discharges, and pollution.
- The remaining objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of drinking water or wastewater proposals.

## Surface Water Objectives

- SW 01 Support the implementation of the relevant County Policy Objectives (CPO's) contained within Chapter 5: Transport, Infrastructure, Energy & Communications, and other relevant chapters of the County Longford Development Plan 2021-2027.
- SW 02 Pursue the resolution of surface water drainage issues as required throughout the town, in conjunction with Uisce Eireann as appropriate.
- SW 03 Require all proposed development to provide sufficient surface water drainage facilities, including attenuation and evidence of outfall suitability and capacity, and how such water is to be sufficiently treated prior to disposal in order to prevent pollution.
- SW 04 Provide surface water attenuation measures where it is considered that the surface water run-off levels exceed permissible discharge rates. Storm water run-off design should be carried out in accordance with Sustainable Drainage Standards (SUDS) best operating practice.
- SW 05 Minimise flood risk arising from pluvial (surface water) flooding in Longford Town by promoting the use of nature-based solutions including sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), minimising extent of hard

surfaces/paving, and smart solutions such as innovative green infrastructure.

- SW 06 Prohibit the discharge of surface water run-off into foul sewage systems.
- SW 07 Maintain, improve and enhance the environmental and ecological quality of surface waters and groundwater in Longford Town in conjunction with the EPA and in accordance with the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027 and future cycles of this Plan.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- The objectives are screened-out as they are either environmental protection objectives or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals for their impacts on surface water flooding.

## Flood Risk Management Objectives

- FR 01 Support the implementation of the relevant County Policy Objectives (CPO's) contained within Chapter 5: Transport, Infrastructure, Energy & Communications, and other relevant chapters of the County Longford Development Plan 2021-2027.
- FR 02 Require that development proposals within the 'Constrained Land Use' zone shall be accompanied by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment, carried out in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines and Circular PL 2/2014 (or as updated), which shall assess the risks of flooding associated with the proposed development, and consider the potential impacts of climate change in the application of these guidelines. Applicants should have regard to the most up-to-date Flood Mapping as presented on the Office of Public Works (OPW) maps.

- FR 03 Require that developments in flood vulnerable areas comply with the requirements as set out in the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 and in particular CPO 5.120 and DMS16.206.
- FR 04 Demonstrate that future development will not result in increased risk of flooding elsewhere, restrict flow paths, where compensatory storage / storm water retention measures shall be provided on site.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- The objectives support implementation and compliance with the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the requirement for a flood risk assessment. The objectives are screened-out as they list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals for their impacts on flooding.

## Sustainable Transport Objectives

- ST 01 Support the implementation of the Longford Town Transportation Plan 2023 and associated strategies contained therein.
- ST 02 Comply with the relevant sections of Chapter 5: Transport, Infrastructure, Energy & Communications of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027, including Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Public Transport, Cycling and Walking County Policy Objectives.
- ST 03 Comply with the specific policies relating to the development of tourism and recreational cycleways and walkways are detailed in Chapter 10: Tourism of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- ST 04 Management of space in town centres to deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport modes to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe, places to work, live, shop and engage in community life.

- ST 05 Seek to implement enhanced pedestrian and cycling permeability and networks in the urban environment of Longford Town in accordance with the provisions of the LTP, the Design Manual of Urban Roads and Streets, (DMURS) (DTTS and DECLG, 2020), the Permeability Best Practice Guidelines, (NTA, 2013) and the National Cycle Manual (NTA, 2011).
- ST06 Seek to implement pedestrian and cycling improvements with the assistance of the NTA through the Green Schools Programme and Sustainable Transport Measures Grants Scheme.
- ST 07 Carry out an Accessibility Audit over the lifetime of this plan in conjunction with the proposed public realm strategy and in association with other local authority departments, associations for the elderly, disabled and other community organisations to assess and improve accessibility for all, particularly within and between important services and the main thoroughfares and public spaces throughout the town.
- ST 08 Encourage larger employers within the town and applications for planning permission to establish employment generating premises to develop mobility management plans to promote sustainable travel choices. This will include measures to support smarter travel such as the provision of cycle facilities and bicycle storage and shower facilities for employees.
- ST 09 Ensure new development areas and employment land-uses are permeable for walking and cycling and are laid out in such a way as to facilitate the operation of and access to public transport by residents and employees.
- ST 10 Ensure that the layout and design of new developments provide for bus stops, passenger waiting facilities, and bus turning and service regulatory layover facilities, as required.
- ST 11 Support and develop public transport routes throughout the town through collaboration with the National Transport Authority.
- ST 12 Retrospectively provide public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure and facilities in existing development areas to achieve growth in sustainable mobility.

## Appendix C Screening Assessment

- ST 13 Provide suitable infrastructure on public transport corridors to improve safety and efficiency for public transport users.
- ST 14 Engage and cooperate with the Department of Transport, National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Irish Rail, Local Link and other stakeholders to improve the provision of public transport and public transport facilities in Longford.
- ST 15 Support the NTA in the provision of new and upgraded bus stops in Longford Town).
- ST 16 Support the development of an integrated transport hub within the town, which serves the county and for the promotion of public transport connectivity between Longford 'Key' town and other towns and villages.
- ST 17 Seek the development of effective cycling infrastructure along the key urban arterial routes to and from Longford Town:
  - R198 – Battery Road/Church Street/Bridge Street;
  - R393 – Dublin Road; and
  - the N63 – Ballinalee Roadin order to coincide with key employment areas, public transport hubs and schools within Longford Town.
- ST 18 Support the provision of electrical charging infrastructure both on street and in new developments in accordance with car parking standards prescribed in Chapter 16: Development Management Standards of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- ST 19 Liaise and collaborate with relevant agencies to support the growth of EVs with support facilities and infrastructure through a roll-out of additional electrical charging infrastructure at appropriate locations in the town.
- ST 20 Support the prioritisation of parking for Electric Vehicles (EVs) in town centre locations.
- ST 21 Address the safety, capacity and strategic function of the national road network in accordance with the provisions of official policy and taking

account of the requirements of the Section 28 DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012).

- ST 22 Carry out detailed traffic impact assessments for development proposed to the north of the N4 Longford bypass and the sequential provision of local roads network provisions as an alternative to the N4/N5 bypass.
- ST 23 Continue to progress the development of the N4 Mullingar-Roskey dual carriageway with the relevant government departments and transport agencies.
- ST 24 Ensure that any proposed development shall have regard to National policy concerning the preservation of the N4 national primary road for National/Regional Traffic.
- ST 25 Require that applications for planning permission on the industrially zoned lands to the north of the N4 Longford Bypass (see Appendix 1 Zoning map) shall be subject to a detailed traffic impact assessment in advance of their consideration for development.
- ST 26 Require developers in specific areas to provide elements of the road network as indicated in the LTP Abbeycartron Access Strategy and associated cycle and pedestrian facilities in accordance with the provisions of the DMURS. This will be required and details agreed in association with permission for such development, where this will facilitate the appropriate access to and movement within the development concerned and to strengthen its relationship with the town centre. Where appropriate, infrastructural funding will be addressed through the provisions of contribution schemes prepared under s.48 & 49 of the Act.
- ST 27 With reference to the LTP Abbeycartron Access Strategy - Longford Northern Environs Local Area Plan 2008-2014 option only, vehicular access to be provided linking Longford town centre and the lands zoned to the north of the Camlin River in the vicinity of Great Water Street, to include a spine road parallel to the Mall Amenity Area. This would be provided by the Local Authority and involve the installation of a new river crossing from the Mall to Great Water Street. This is to be funded through the application of specific levies on development that would benefit from such a link (in accordance with a specific scheme under S. 49 of the Act).



- ST 28 Links bridging the Camlin River and facilitating east-west movements as alternatives to the existing N4/N5 bypass would be provided as developer-led interconnectors providing access to and within the site. These will be provided as part of a legible and permeable road network to make connections across the northern portion of the town and protect the national road network (See LTP Abbeycartron Access Strategy).
- ST 29 A vehicular bridge will be provided to link proposed new development on the east and west side of the Camlin River (see LTP Abbeycartron Access Strategy)
- ST 30 A permeable secondary road network shall be provided to the lands to the south of the bypass to support and protect the capacity of the national road network. Road lines illustrated are indicative (see LTP Abbeycartron Access Strategy) and shall be clarified along with defined access and egress points prior to construction in consultation with the infrastructure department of Longford County Council.
- ST 31 With reference to the LTP Abbeycartron Access Strategy - Longford Northern Environs Local Area Plan 2008-2014 option only, the southern spine route will be developed as indicated to facilitate the development of lands zoned to the north. All developments permitted that will benefit from the development of this route will be levied in accordance with a special scheme under s. 49 of the PDA to facilitate the construction of this route.
- ST 32 Support and facilitate the implementation of the pedestrian, cycle, public transport, car parking, traffic management, and permeability 'Priority Schemes' set out in the Local Transport Plan. Proposals for new development will be required to demonstrate how they will integrate with the provisions of the Local Transport Plan.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objectives ST 05, ST 06, ST 17, ST 21, ST 26 – ST 32 support the development of active travel routes such as walking and cycling; the delivery of the N4 dual carriageway; and the delivery of new transport

infrastructure such as roads / bridges over the Camlin River to support the Abberycarton Access Strategy. Therefore, they are screened-in for further assessment as they could result in development-based impacts and increased access to and recreational pressure on European sites.

- The remaining objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of transport proposals.

## Chapter 14 of the LAP - Climate Change

### Climate Change Objectives

- CC 01 Support the implementation of the County Longford Climate Change Adaption Strategy, or any succeeding document, with regard to its goals, objectives and actions relating to the planning and development of Longford Town.
- CC 02 Support the implementation of the relevant County Policy Objectives (CPO's) contained within *Chapter 3: Climate* and other relevant chapters of the *County Longford Development Plan 2021-2027*.
- CC 03 Support the implementation of the relevant Climate Actions contained at the end of individual chapters of the *County Longford Development Plan 2021-2027*.
- CC 04 Support the implementation of the Draft *Climate Action Plan 2024-2029* any other subsequent Climate related document deemed relevant by the Planning Authority.
- CC 05 Ensure all plans and projects carried out in Longford encourage and provide for climate resilient measures.
- CC 06 Support the circular and bio-economy through achieving greater efficiency in land management by building at sustainable densities and prioritising brownfield development in accordance with the Core Strategy of the *Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027*.

- CC 07 Encourage the development of local renewable and low carbon energy sources in Longford Town both retrofitting and as part of new development proposals in accordance with the Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy (LARES).
- CC 08 Encourage innovative solutions to enhance local biodiversity within streets and open spaces through the utilisation of the incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) for surface water management where possible.
- CC 09 Support and promote the use of biodiversity techniques, such as green roofs and walls and the integration of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) into all new development schemes.
- CC 10 Avoid inappropriate development in flood prone lands zoned '*Constrained Land Use*'.
- CC 11 Create an integrated green infrastructure network to support urban biodiversity, water retention and flood alleviation, allowing for natural and unhindered inundation during flood events.
- CC 12 Reduce Longford's local carbon footprint caused by transport emissions by increasing connectivity and prioritising sustainable movement routes to key destinations within the town through the incorporation of relevant recommendations from the Longford Local Transport Plan 2023.
- CC 13 Create and develop well planned sustainable communities, where sustainable modes of travel are encouraged to local facilities such as education, work and commercial activity.
- CC 14 Promote sustainable patterns of development including development in sustainable locations.
- CC 15 Support the development of sustainable low-carbon climate resilient communities and encourage a climate adaptation and mitigation approach to development which will enable regeneration.
- CC 16 Support the delivery of the 'Decarbonisation Zone' in Longford Town and associated implementation plan promoting measures to reduce

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and improve general environmental conditions in the area.

- CC 17 Promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFÉ) Directive (2008/50/EC) and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 201) (or any updated/superseding documents).
- CC 18 Ensure that applications for all new development shall be assessed against the latest technical standards relating to sustainable building construction and materials, traffic and pedestrian safety, access and service provision, effluent disposal and the protection of public health and the environment.
- CC 19 Support the adaption of existing homes to reduce energy use subject to Development Management provisions.
- CC 20 Minimise resource and energy requirements for new developments through appropriate siting, design, and layout, making the most of natural systems both within and around buildings.
- CC 21 Support high levels of energy conservation, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources in existing buildings, including retrofitting of appropriate energy efficiency measures in the existing building stock, and to actively retrofit Longford County Council's housing stock to a B2 Building Energy Rating (BER) in line with the Government's Housing for All Plan retrofit targets for 2030, subject to Development Management provisions.
- CC 22 Support Energy Master Plans prepared by Sustainable Energy Communities in Longford Town.
- CC 23 Support the delivery of facilities needed to divert waste away from landfill and promote the prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery of materials (including heat from waste) with disposal to landfill as the final option.

- CC 24 Promote and encourage positive community and/or co-operative led climate action initiatives and projects in Longford Town that seek to reduce carbon emissions, improve energy efficiency, enhance green infrastructure and encourage awareness on climate change issues.
- CC 25 Encourage innovation and facilitate the development of pilot schemes in Longford Town that support climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objectives CC 07, CC 11 and CC 12 encourage the development of local renewable and low carbon energy sources; the creation of an integrated green infrastructure network; and the development of a sustainable transport network in the town. Therefore, these objectives could result in development-based impacts and increased access to and recreational pressure on European sites.
- All other objectives do not result in development and support compliance with the County Longford Development Plan, Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and the Draft Climate Action Plan. A number of objectives support sustainable building and reducing Longford's carbon footprint.

## Chapter 15 of the LAP - Implementation and Monitoring

### Active Land Management Objectives

- AL 01 Support the sequential development of lands with preference for Tier 1 followed by Tier 2 lands in accordance with the findings of the IAR (see CDP, Volume 3, Annex 5).

- AL 02 Undertake the sequential development of lands shall from the town core out according to the availability or feasibility of delivering services.
- AL 03 Ensure lands zoned 'Strategic Residential Reserve' other than for the certain specific criteria specified in Volume 2, Appendix IA of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 *'provide for the longer-term housing requirements of the town'*.
- AL 04 Promote more active land management and co-ordinate provision of enabling infrastructure particularly on publicly owned lands.
- AL 05 Support the National Land Development Agency and other relevant agencies in co-ordinating and developing large, strategically located landbanks, particularly publicly owned lands, in town centres and other locations as deemed appropriate throughout the County.
- AL 06 Use, where appropriate, Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) and other incentives including development contributions in combination with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 in order to encourage urban regeneration of brownfield lands over the development of greenfield sites.
- AL 07 Maintain and update a Vacant Sites Register in accordance with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015.
- AL 08 Facilitate the implementation of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, by utilising site activation measures, including the provision of the Vacant Site Levy, to assist in bringing vacant and underutilised zoned land into beneficial use.
- AL 09 Maintain and update the Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) Maps as required.

### Are the objectives likely to have significant effects?

- Objectives AL 01, AL 02, AL 05 and AL 06 support the development of zoned lands, landbanks and CPO of brownfield land. Therefore, these

## Appendix C Screening Assessment

objectives are screened-in as they are likely to result in development-based impacts.

- The remaining objectives are either not likely to have a significant effect alone / in-combination or list criteria for testing the acceptability / sustainability of proposals.

## Appendix D

### Attributes of European sites

#### Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA

**D.1** Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA is located on the border between Counties Longford and Roscommon in the north-central midlands and is underlain by Carboniferous limestone. It is centred around Lough Forbes, a naturally eutrophic lake on the River Shannon system which is fed also from the north by the River Rinn. The lake has well-developed swamp vegetation and displays natural transitions to seasonally flooded grassland, marsh and raised bog. The raised bogs, known as the Ballykenny-Fisherstown complex, are separated by the Camlin River, which has further areas of callow grassland. The centre core areas of the bogs are quite wet with a good complement of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) and well-developed hummocks. Ballykenny Bog is unusual in that some of its margins are intact, a rare feature in the Irish midlands. Between the Camlin River and this bog, a complete transition from raised bog to callow grasslands can be seen while the interface between the bog and lake is colonised by a narrow band of deciduous woodland.

**D.2** At the time this site was designated as a SPA it was being sued by part of the Loughs Kilglass and Forbes Greenland White-fronted Goose population. The geese appear to have since abandoned the peatland sites in favour of grassland sites elsewhere. The site was regularly utilised during the 1980s and Greenland White-fronted Goose is regarded as a special conservation interest for this SPA. The last record of Greenland White-fronted Goose at this site was in 1990/91 (111 individuals). Merlin and Red Grouse have also been recorded within the site. The lake and callow grasslands provide good habitat for a range of wintering waterfowl species though most occur in relatively low numbers: Cormorant (51), Whooper Swan (4), Wigeon (419), Teal (444), Tufted Duck (49) and Goldeneye (11) – are counts are two year mean peaks for the period 1998/99 to 1999/2000.



## Qualifying Interests

- Greenland White-fronted Goose; *Anser albifrons flavirostris* [A395]

## Conservation Objectives

**D.3** The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

**D.4** The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

**D.5** To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:

- Greenland White-fronted Goose; *Anser albifrons flavirostris* [A395]

## Key Vulnerabilities

### High Rank

- None.

### Medium Rank

- Grazing;
- Nautical sports; and
- Silviculture, forestry.

### Low Rank

- Leisure fishing; and
- Hunting

## Glen Lough SPA

**D.6** Glen Lough is situated about 5km north-west of Lough Iron on the border of County Westmeath and County Longford. Extensive drainage in the 1960s has resulted in a dramatic drop in the water table here, with the result that there is now little open water, except during flooding in the winter months. Sedge-dominated freshwater marsh now occupies the majority of what was once open water. Plant species present include Bottle Sedge; *Carex rostrata*, Water Horsetail; *Equisetium fluviatile* and Canary Reed-grass; *Phalaris arundinacea*. Other habitats present include reed swamp, wet and dry grassland, cutaway bog colonised by heath vegetation, scrub and wet willow (*Salix* spp.) woodland.

**D.7** An internationally important Whooper Swan population uses the site at times. This flock (mean peak of 327 individuals for the 5 seasons 1995/96-

1999/2000) also uses Lough Iron and a range of grassland feeding areas in the vicinity. At times, the site is visited by part of the internationally important Midland lakes Greenland White-fronted Goose population, although numbers are low (17). Dabbling ducks are well represented, but in relatively low numbers, and include such species as Wigeon (81), Teal (69), Mallard (46), Pintail (7) and Shoveler (23). Lapwing (189) is also found in the area (all figures are mean peaks for the 5 seasons 1995/96-1999/2000).

**D.8** Whilst this site attracts a range of wintering waterfowl, the principal ornithological interest lies in the internationally important Whooper Swan population that is based in the area. Whooper Swan is of particular note as it is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Greenland White-fronted Goose, nowadays an occasional visitor to the site, is also listed on Annex I of this Directive. The site provides useful habitat for Shoveler, which in Ireland is a fairly localised species. Glen Lough is a Ramsar Convention site.

### Qualifying Interests

- Whooper Swan; *Cygnus cygnus* [A038]

### Conservation Objectives

**D.9** The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

## Appendix D Attributes of European sites

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

**D.10** To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:

- Whooper Swan; *Cygnus cygnus* [A038]

## Key Vulnerabilities

### High Rank

- Fertilisation.

### Medium Rank

- Forest planting on open ground.

### Low Rank

- None.

## Lough Ree SPA

**D.11** Lough Ree SPA is of high ornithological importance for both wintering and breeding birds. It supports nationally important populations of eleven wintering waterfowl species. The site has a range of breeding waterfowl species, notably

nationally important populations of Common Scoter and Common Tern. Of particular note is the regular presence of three species, Whooper Swan, Golden Plover and Common Tern, which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Parts of Lough Ree SPA are Wildfowl Sanctuaries.

**D.12** Lough Ree is one of the most important Midland sites for wintering waterfowl, with nationally important populations of Little Grebe (52), Whooper Swan (139), Wigeon (2,070), Teal (1,474), Mallard (1,087), Shoveler (54), Tufted Duck (1,012), Goldeneye (205), Coot (338), Golden Plover (3,058) and Lapwing (5,793) – all figures are three year mean peaks for the period 1997/98 to 1999/2000. Other species which occur in winter include Great Crested Grebe (29), Cormorant (99), Curlew (254) and Black-headed Gull (307) as well as the resident Mute Swan (85). Greenland White-fronted Goose has been recorded on occasion on the flooded margins of the site.

### Qualifying Interests

- Little Grebe; *Tachybaptus ruficollis* [A004]
- Whooper Swan; *Cygnus cygnus* [A038]
- Wigeon; *Anas Penelope* [A050]
- Teal; *Anas crecca* [A052]
- Mallard; *Anas platyrhynchos* [A053]
- Shoveler; *Anas clypeata* [A056]
- Tufted Duck; *Aythya fuligula* [A061]
- Common Scoter; *Melanitta nigra* [A065]
- Goldeneye; *Bucephala clangula* [A067]
- Coot; *Fulica atra* [A125]
- Golden Plover; *Pluvialis apricaria* [A140]
- Lapwing; *Vanellus vanellus* [A142]
- Common Tern; *Sterna hirundo* [A193]

- Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]

### Conservation Objectives

**D.13** The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

**D.14** The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

**D.15** To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:

- Little Grebe; *Tachybaptus ruficollis* [A004]
- Whooper Swan; *Cygnus cygnus* [A038]
- Wigeon; *Anas Penelope* [A050]
- Teal; *Anas crecca* [A052]
- Mallard; *Anas platyrhynchos* [A053]
- Shoveler; *Anas clypeata* [A056]

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- Tufted Duck; *Aythya fuligula* [A061]
- Common Scoter; *Melanitta nigra* [A065]
- Goldeneye; *Bucephala clangula* [A067]
- Coot; *Fulica atra* [A125]
- Golden Plover; *Pluvialis apricaria* [A140]
- Lapwing; *Vanellus vanellus* [A142]
- Common Tern; *Sterna hirundo* [A193]
- Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]

**D.16** To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat at Lough Ree SPA as a resource for the regularly-occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it.

## Key Vulnerabilities

### High Rank

- Nautical sports.

### Medium Rank

- Invasive non-native species;
- Fertilisation;
- Leisure fishing;
- Hunting;
- Walking, horse riding and non-motorised vehicles; and
- Grazing.

### Low Rank

- Sylviculture, forestry.

## Brown Bog SAC

**D.17** Brown Bog is located 5km north-west of Longford town, mainly in the townlands of Tully, Lissanurlan and Cartronlebagh. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The bog margins are mainly surrounded by scrub/woodland. There are few land uses associated with this site. There are no high bog drains and only two sets of marginal drains are present in the cutover to the north-west. At present there is no active peat-cutting on the site. A large area of cutover to the east of the site has been recently afforested with Sitka Spruce; *Picea sitchensis*. The majority of the bog has not been burnt for some time, although recent localised burning has taken place along the southern margin. Overall there has been little damage to this bog, with only small areas of cutover present. Most of the extent of the original peat basin appears to be remaining. However, peat-cutting and burning are the two main threats to the site.

**D.18** Brown Bog is a site of considerable conservation significance as it comprises a relatively little-damaged raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. Although the site is small it supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats including hummock/hollow complexes, pools and a flush system with surrounding tear pool complex, along with cutover which adds to the diversity and scientific value of the site. Active raised bog is listed as a priority habitat on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Priority status is given to habitats and species that are threatened throughout the E.U. Ireland has a high proportion of the E.U. resource of this habitat type (over 60%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.



## Qualifying Interests

- Active raised bogs [7110]
- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
- Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]

## Conservation Objectives

**D.19** The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

**D.20** The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

## Site Specific Objectives

- To restore the favourable conservation condition of active raised bogs in Brown Bog SAC.

## Key Vulnerabilities

### High Rank

- None.

### Medium Rank

- Drying out.

### Low Rank

- Other human induced changes in hydraulic conditions.

## Mount Jessop Bog SAC

**D.21** Mount Jessop Bog SAC occurs within the larger raised bog system that is designated as Mount Jessop Bog NHA (001450). It is situated 5km south-west of Longford Town in the townland of Mount Jessop, County Longford. The site is part of a basin raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bordered by open high bog on its northern and western sides and by agricultural land on its eastern side and southern side. The underlying geology is carboniferous limestone.

**D.22** Mount Jessop Bog SAC is a site of considerable conservation significance comprising raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. It contains good examples of the Habitats Directive Annex I habitat Degraded Raised Bog (capable of regeneration) which is reverting to the priority Annex 1 habitat Active Raised Bog (7110) and a small area of the Annex 1 priority habitat Bog Woodland which is developing on the cutover. The site already supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including some hummock/hollow complexes, and rewetted cutover bog. Red Grouse, a bird which is becoming increasingly rare

in Ireland, has been recorded at this site, along with the Irish Hare – a Red Data Book species – which increases its overall scientific interest.

### Qualifying Interests

- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
- Bog woodland [91D0]

### Conservation Objectives

**D.23** The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

**D.24** The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

**D.25** To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:

- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]

- Bog woodland [91D0]

### Key Vulnerabilities

#### High Rank

- Other human induced changes in hydraulic conditions.

#### Medium Rank

- Invasive non-native species; and
- Burning down vegetation.

#### Low Rank

- Problematic native species.

### Lough Forbes Complex SAC

**D.26** This site consists of a number of different habitats, and is centred around Lough Forbes, a lake formed by a broadening of the River Shannon. As well as the lake itself, there is also a series of raised bogs, callow grasslands and a variety of other aquatic and terrestrial habitats to the west of Newtown Forbes on the Longford/Roscommon boundary.

**D.27** The raised bogs are vulnerable to water loss from peat-cutting and drainage, though ongoing restoration work involving blocking of drains is occurring. There are no known threats to the wintering birds though the increased use of the River Shannon system by leisure craft could cause disturbance. The importance of the Lough Forbes site lies in its excellent diversity of habitats, some of which, for example the raised bogs, are rare and threatened. The site is also of ornithological importance for its wintering

waterfowl, breeding Merlin and Red Grouse. The presence of Whooper Swan and Merlin is of particular note as these species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

### Qualifying Interests

- Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition – type vegetation [3150]
- Active raised bogs [7110]
- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
- Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]

### Conservation Objectives

**D.28** The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

**D.29** The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and

- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

### Site Specific Objectives

- To restore the favourable conservation condition of natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition – type vegetation in Lough Forbes Complex SAC;
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of active raised bogs in Lough Forbes Complex SAC; and
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*) in Lough Forbes Complex SAC.

### Key Vulnerabilities

#### High Rank

- Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing.

#### Medium Rank

- Abandonment/lack of mowing.

#### Low Rank

- Leisure fishing;
- Hunting;
- Diffuse groundwater pollution due to agricultural and forestry activities;
- Invasive non-native species; and
- Groundwater abstractions for public water supply.

## Clooneen Bog SAC

**D.30** Clooneen Bog lies approximately 3km south-east of Roosky in County Longford on the east bank of the River Shannon, just north of Lough Forbes. It is located almost entirely in the townlands of Clooneen, Bunanass, Edercloon and Cloonart (North and South). The site comprises areas of high bog, including bog woodland and cutover bog, and is bounded by a mineral ridge to the east and agricultural fields to the north. Although it would have originally adjoined the River Shannon to the west and Lough Forbes to the south, it is now separated from these by a road and agricultural fields.

**D.31** Current land use on the site consists of mechanised peat-cutting to the north-west and south-west of the high bog. Some areas of cutover have been reclaimed for agriculture to the south-east and there are small conifer plantations to the east. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage and burning. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site and pose a continuing threat to its viability. The bog is generally Sphagnum-poor due to burning, but regeneration is taking place.

**D.32** Clooneen Bog is a site of considerable conservation significance as it consists of a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of this habitat type (over 60%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level. Bog woodland is listed as a priority habitat on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive - priority status is given to habitats and species that are threatened throughout the E.U. The areas of degraded raised bog and Rhynchosporion are also of conservation importance, being habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

## Qualifying Interests

- Active raised bogs [7110]

- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
- Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]
- Bog woodland [91D0]

## Conservation Objectives

**D.33** The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

**D.34** The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

## Site Specific Objectives

- To restore the favourable conservation condition of degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration in Clooneen Bog SAC; and
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of bog woodland in Clooneen Bog SAC.



## Key Vulnerabilities

### High Rank

- None.

### Medium Rank

- Mechanical removal of peat.

### Low Rank

- Non-intensive cattle grazing; and
- Irrigation.

## Lough Ree SAC

**D.35** Lough Ree is the third largest lake in Ireland and is situated in an ice-deepened depression in Carboniferous limestone on the River Shannon system between Lanesborough and Athlone. The site spans Counties Longford, Roscommon and Westmeath. Some of its features (including the islands) are based on glacial drift. It has a very long, indented shoreline and hence has many sheltered bays. Although the main habitat, by area, is the lake itself, interesting shoreline, terrestrial and semi-aquatic habitats also occur.

**D.36** Land uses within the site include recreation in the form of cruiser hire, angling, camping, picnicking and shooting. Chalet accommodation occurs at a few locations around the lake. Low-intensity grazing occurs on dry and wet grassland around the shore, and some hay is made within the site. Some of these activities are damaging, but in a very localised way, and require careful planning. The main threat to the aquatic life in the lake comes from artificial enrichment of the waters by agricultural and domestic waste, and also by peat

silt in suspension which is increasingly limiting the light penetration, and thus restricting aquatic flora to shallower waters. At present Lough Ree is less affected by eutrophication than Lough Derg. Lough Ree and its adjacent habitats are of major ecological significance. Some of the woodlands around the lake are of excellent. St John's Wood is particularly important; it is one of the very few remaining ancient woodlands in Ireland. The lake itself is an excellent example of a mesotrophic to moderate-eutrophic system, supporting a rare fish species and a good diversity of breeding and wintering birds.

### Qualifying Interests

- Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition – type vegetation [3150]
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (important orchid sites) [6210]
- Active raised bogs [7110]
- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
- Alkaline fens [7230]
- Limestone pavements [8240]
- Bog woodland [91D0]
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]
- Otter; *Lutra lutra* [1355]

### Conservation Objectives

**D.37** The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;

## Appendix D Attributes of European sites

- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

**D.38** The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

### Site Specific Objectives

- To restore the favourable conservation condition of natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition – type vegetation in Lough Ree SAC;
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) in Lough Ree SAC;
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration in Lough Ree SAC;
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of alkaline fens in Lough Ree SAC;
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of limestone pavements in Lough Ree SAC;
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of bog woodland in Lough Ree SAC; and

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of otter in Lough Ree SAC.

### Key Vulnerabilities

#### High Rank

- Invasive non-native species;
- Other siltation rate changes; and
- Antagonism arising from introduction of species.

#### Medium Rank

- Abandonment/lack of mowing;
- Grazing;
- Fertilisation;
- Forest and plantation management and use;
- Dispersed habitation;
- Leisure fishing;
- Hunting;
- Nautical sports;
- Diffuse pollution to surface waters due to household sewage and waste waters; and
- Diffuse groundwater pollution due to agricultural and forestry activities.

#### Low Rank

- Piers/tourist harbours or recreational piers;

- Walking, horse riding and non-motorised vehicles;
- Thermal heating of waterbodies;
- Flooding modifications; and
- Inundation (natural processes).

### Fortwilliam Turlough SAC

**D.39** Fortwilliam Turlough is situated close to the eastern shore of Lough Ree, 6km south of Lanesborough, in County Longford. The surrounding countryside is flat, with a thin cover of drift. The floor of the basin is at two levels, a lower central area with several lakes and ponds, and a higher surrounding area of till with scattered rocks, extending north-westwards into flat fields and woodland. There is a little surface flow into the basin and floodwater appears to be strongly calcareous.

**D.40** Threats to turloughs stem mainly from drainage and agricultural improvement. Fortwilliam seems largely unaffected by drainage, and standing water may persist throughout the summer. It is an oligotrophic site, which indicates that it has escaped significant nutrient input but renders it sensitive to damage should this occur. The turlough is grazed by cattle and sheep, but is undivided. Fortwilliam is the only extant large turlough in Longford and one of only two east of the River Shannon. It has a high diversity caused by a semi-permanent waterbody, abundant marl precipitation, a relative lack of grazing and small outcrops of limestone, so it is a very representative example of the habitat. The turlough basin seems intact, its basin and hydrology largely unmodified. Its oligotrophic status is valuable, as this feature is becoming rarer in the context of modern agriculture. Due to these factors, Fortwilliam Turlough is a site of considerable ecological value.

### Qualifying Interests

- Turloughs [3180]

## Conservation Objectives

**D.41** The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

**D.42** The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

## Site Specific Objectives

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of turloughs in Fortwilliam Turlough SAC.

## Key Vulnerabilities

### High Rank

- Intensive cattle grazing.

### Medium Rank

- None.

### Low Rank

- Diffuse groundwater pollution due to agricultural and forestry activities;
- Groundwater abstractions for agriculture; and
- Groundwater abstractions for public water supply.

## Ardagullion Bog SAC

**D.43** Ardaguillion Bog is located 5km north-east of Edgeworthstown, mainly in the townlands of Cloonshannagh (Coolamber Manor Demesne) and Ardaguillon in County Longford. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bounded in the north-east by the local road running to Coolagherty. This site is the remnant of a much larger bog that is now cutover and afforested. There are areas of hummocks and pools in the centre of the high bog and the ground is wet and quaking. There is one flush in the centre of the high bog. There is a small area of coniferous forestry on a section of high bog and cutover in the south-west of the site. Cutover bog is found all around this site.

**D.44** Ardagullion Bog is a site of considerable conservation significance as it comprises a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. The site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummocks and pools. Active raised bog is listed as a priority habitat on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Priority status is given to habitats and species that are threatened throughout the E.U. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of this habitat type (over 60%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.

## Qualifying Interests

- Active raised bogs [7110]
- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
- Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]

## Conservation Objectives

**D.45** The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

**D.46** The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

## Site Specific Objectives

- To restore the favourable conservation condition of active raised bogs in Ardagullion Bog SAC.



## Key Vulnerabilities

No threats or pressures.

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- 20 [Longford County Council \(2021\) Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027](#)
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